Bass Guitar Magazine PRESENTS

BASSES YOU MUST PLAY!

KILLER AMPS!

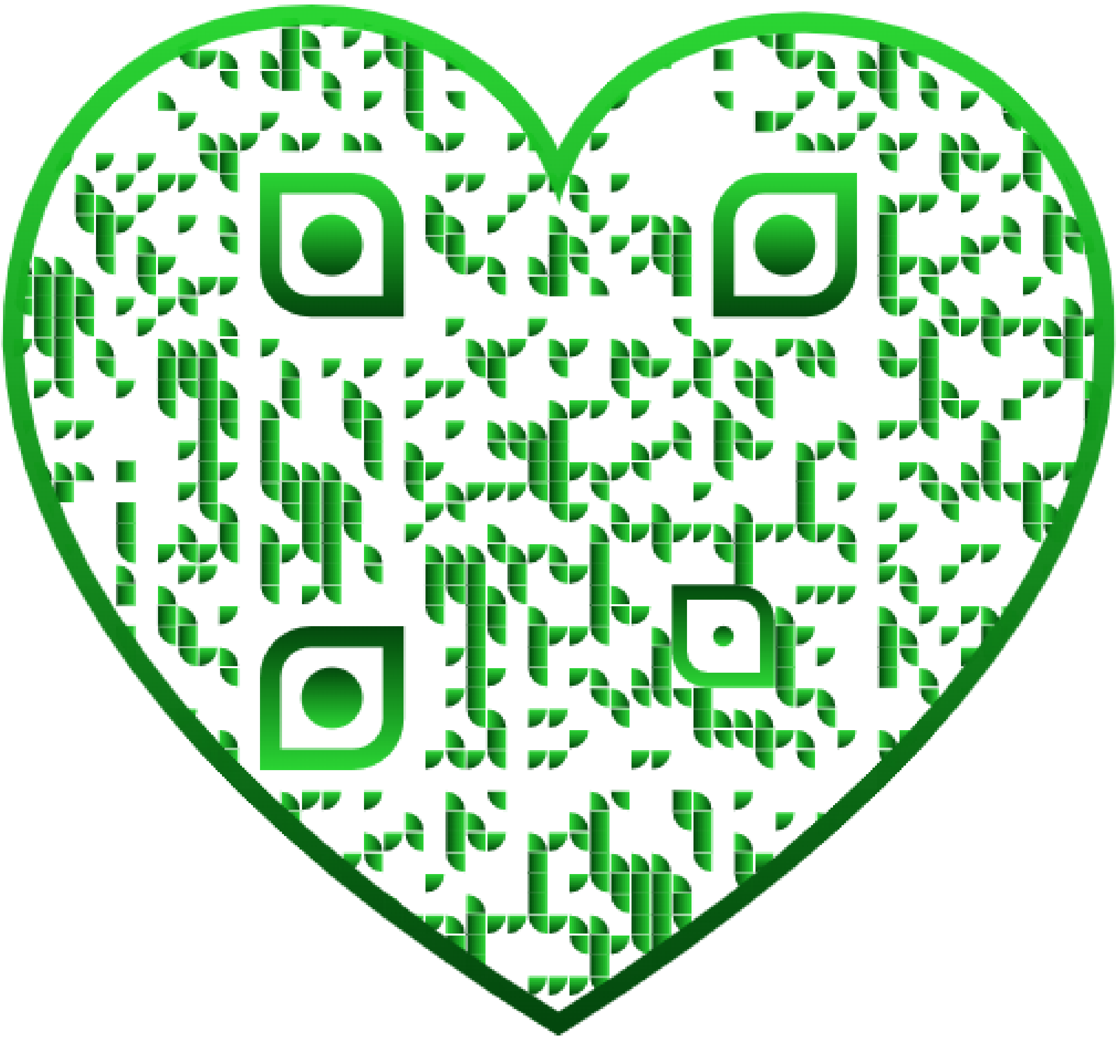
AMAZING EFFECTS!

BRINGING YOU THE GEAR YOU'LL NEED TO MAKE YOU A BETTER BASS PLAYER

FROM THE UK'S **NUMBER 1** BASS GUITAR MAGAZINE

ACG - ANACONDA - BC RICH - BILL NASH - BREEDLOVE - CORT - DINGWALL - ENFIELD - ERNIE BALL - FENDER - FODERA - GIBSON - IBANEZ - LAKLAND - RICKENBACKER - SANDBERG - SPECTOR - STATUS - WARWICK - YAMAHA

www.bassguitarmagazine.com UK £7.99
02
9 772055 507001 >



THE GREAT BRITISH
BASS LOUNGE
LOWERING THE TONE
Specialists in fine, hand-built, British bass guitars.
We offer an extensive selection of new and pre-owned instruments, amplification and accessories.
07837 011 889 / 0161 799 9002 | drew@greatbritishbasslounge.com
greatbritishbasslounge.com
VISA
MasterCard
"My aim is simple - to deliver an unrivalled personal experience when you consider your next purchase. My time is your time... contact me for a no-obligation appointment".
Drew
Proud dealers for:
Mark bass
Cort
G&L
Breedlove
GK
TECH 21
AB
NS DESIGN
Rickenbacker
Tokai
sandberg
Plus: PAUL EVERSON GUITARS, ENFIELD GUITARS, GORDON-SMITH GUITARS, BASS COLLECTION, PHIL JONES BASS, BAREFACED BASS.

Foreword by

STUART HAMM

The great bassist welcomes you to *Bass Guitar Magazine Presents… Basses You Must Play*

There are a few stories about how I got started playing bass, and there is a little truth in all of them. As a pudgy, long-haired geek growing up in a notch of the Bible Belt called Champaign, Illinois, my role model was Danny Partridge – as played by Danny Bonaduce – from the TV series *The Partridge Family*. Danny was the bass player in the show, which was about a family that started a rock band… with Mom as the singer! Danny kind of looked like me, or so I liked to think, and was the geeky brains of the operation. He usually played a Fender bass, and had this amazing technique of playing whole songs without actually moving his left hand up and down the neck… I'm still working on that one.

Around the same time, a rock band set up to play a free concert on the tennis courts in a park near our house. I jumped on my bike and pedalled as fast as I could to see what the noise was all about. The bass player was playing a dark green Fender Jazz with a matching headstock, the most beautiful thing I had ever seen in my life. A curly white Bar-B-Q cable connected that dream bass to a Kustom amp with padded silver cushioned siding and chrome portholes.

I was hooked for life.

I asked for an electric bass that Christmas, and when the day came I snuck into my parents' room to snoop around and see if they had gotten it for me. I vividly recall reaching my arm into their closet and feeling my fingers touch the strings and make them vibrate… they had gotten me the bass! It was a pawnshop special, maybe an Alvarez – a burgundy red, double cutaway SG type of deal. The first thing I did, of course, was to put a Silver Surfer sticker between the tuning pegs on the headstock. You couldn't do that with a Fender!

When it came time to move up to a real bass, I became the proud owner of a white 1975 Fender Jazz. What a bass that was! It quickly gained a brass Schecter pickguard, bridge and nut, and my friend Marietta made small brass stars that I glued on to frame the body. They cut the hell out of my right forearm, but they looked awesome. When I went to Berklee, I had my first active EMG pickups installed. That bass was stolen from my apartment in Boston, so I briefly played an Alembic budget model and a fretless Pedulla-Orsini. I eventually got the Fender back and it made the long trip with me to where all of the loose ends in the United States roll… Los Angeles.

I played that bass with the Michael Gibbs Big Band, an Elvis impersonator called El-John, on my audition for Frank Zappa and with Steve Vai on his *Flex-Able* album. There was a time in L.A. that I was so broke that the bass was in and out of a pawn shop on Van Nuys Boulevard. Once I couldn't come up with the cash to get it out of hock, and by the time I scraped up the money it was gone, never to been seen or heard from since. Damn…

Then I saw an ad in a guitar magazine for a Kubicki X-Factor bass. Whoa! It was the coolest thing I had seen since that guy on the tennis courts… I went to the NAMM show, searched out the Kubicki booth, picked one up and quickly drew a crowd by playing music that I had been experimenting with, which was enhanced by that bass.

When Fender bought Kubicki, I met Fender Master Builder John Page, who had this crazy idea which he was running out of a garage on the outskirts of the Fender factory. He called it the Custom Shop. Together, John and I combined the classic features of what we loved about Fender basses, and added some new wrinkles for a Fender, including a 24-fret neck, active electronics, and a more ergonomic design. I'm delighted to this day to be able to say that we designed the first ever Fender Signature bass. The first prototype is on display at Larry Hartke's Bass Lounge in New York.

I just love basses. I love Warwick, who make my signature bass nowadays. I love Rickenbacker. I love BC Rich. I love Fodera. I love Gibson. I stare at them and play them all at every music store I visit. Simple and to the point. Functional and beautiful. Sunburst and sparkly. Just frackin' cool looking…

Here, then, are a bunch of basses you must play. I want to drool over, hold and play each and every one of them. This bookazine is a love letter to all bassists. Enjoy!

worldmags

CONTENTS

BASS GUITAR MAGAZINE PRESENTS... BASSES YOU MUST PLAY

Welcome, readers, to *Bass Guitar Magazine Presents... Basses You Must Play*, in which we've collated a ton of reviews of desirable bass guitars from the *BGM* archives as part of our magazine's ongoing mission to make you a better bass player. Whether it's an £11,000 Fodera you're after – and why not? – or a bass which you can snap up for a mere few hundred quid, this is your one-stop shop for all things bass-related, and the perfect companion for our first bookazine, *BGM Presents... The Essential Bass Guide*, published last year. Oh, and we've thrown in reviews of cool amps and effects pedals too, just to round off the package. Bookended by a foreword and afterword from the great Stuart Hamm and Dave Swift, this publication will take you a long way towards your goal. Let us know what you think when you've read it, and as always, we'll see you at the annual London Bass Guitar Show, held every March at Olympia in Kensington!

Joel McIver, editor

www.bassguitarmagazine.com
www.londonbassguitarshow.com
www.facebook.com/bassguitarmagazine
www.facebook.com/londonbassguitarshow
@bassguitarmagazine
@londonbassguitarshow

Note: *Gear prices fluctuate, of course, and you may find that the costs of various items have changed since they were originally reviewed – so check before you order.*

EDITOR Joel McIver, joel@blazepublishing.co.uk
SUB-EDITORS Jessica Hanson, Hannah McAdams, Nick Robbins
CONTRIBUTORS Duff Battye, Mike Brooks, Dave Clarke, Mike Flynn, Ian Glasper, Joel Graham, Matthew Oakley, Kevin Sanders, Jack Stevens, Dave Thorpe, Nick Wells, Sam Wise
GRAPHIC DESIGN Steve Dawson
AD DESIGN Meggie Wilson
PHOTOGRAPHY: Eckie
ADVERTISING Guy Meredith
OPERATIONS DIRECTOR James Folkard
ASSISTANT PUBLISHER Ruth Burgess
PUBLISHER Wes Stanton
ACCOUNTS Dave Deo
SUBSCRIPTIONS subs@blazepublishing.co.uk, 01926 339808

Printed in the UK © Blaze Publishing Ltd 2015.
All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form, stored in a retrieval system or integrated into any other publication, database or commercial program without the express permission of the publishers in writing. Under no circumstances should this publication and its contents be sold, loaned out or used by way of trade, or stored or transmitted as an electronic file without the publishers prior written approval.

DISCLAIMER
While Blaze Publishing Ltd prides itself on the quality of the information its publications provide, the company reserves the right not to be held legally responsible for any mistakes or inaccuracies found within the text of this publication.
Bass Guitar Magazine is an independent publication and as such does not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of manufacturers or distributors of the products contained within. All trademarks are acknowledged.

DISTRIBUTION
Distributed to the news trade by Comag Magazine Marketing, West Drayton, Middlesex, UB7 7QE
PUBLISHED BY
Blaze Publishing Ltd. Lawrence House, Morrell Street, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 5SZ
***Bass Guitar Magazine* is proud to support the Music Industries Association.**

/bassguitarmagazine /bassguitarmag

blaze PUBLISHING
mia Music Industries Association

Basses

6 Basses Introduction
9 ACG MBL Finn
12 Anaconda Tribute J4E Elite, Crusher CXE6 Elite
14 BC Rich Paolo Gregoletto Warlock
18 Bill Nash PB-57
22 Breedlove Atlas Series Solo BJ350 CME4
24 Cort Rithimic
26 Dingwall Super P
30 Enfield English Rose 4 and 5
34 Ernie Ball Music Man Reflex
38 Fender 50th Anniversary Jazz
42 Fodera Amboyna Burl Monarch 4 Elite
46 Gibson Krist Novoselic Signature RD
51 Ibanez Grooveline G104
55 Lakland Skyline 44-01 Deluxe
59 Rickenbacker 4003 Mapleglo
62 Sandberg Electra TT and VS
67 Spector Performer
72 Status Series 3
76 Warwick Corvette NT LTD 2010
80 Yamaha BB424

26
Dingwall

86
Ampeg

Amps

84 Amps Introduction
86 Ampeg V-4B Head, SVT 212 AV Cab
88 Ashdown AAA Vintage 12, MAG C112-220 Combos
91 Hartke HD25 And HD50 Combos
93 Mesa Bass Prodigy Four:88 Head
96 Barefaced Super Compact 12 Cabinet
98 Music Man BH-500 Head, 810-BS Cab, 115-B 250 Combo
100 TC Electronic BH 800 Head

104
Aguilar

Effects

103 Pedals Introduction
104 Aguilar Chorosaurus
106 3Leaf Audio You're Doom, Darkglass Electronics Duality Dual Fuzz Engine
107 Diamond Bass Compressor, Aphex Bass Aural Xciter
110 EBS Billy Sheehan Signature Drive
111 Mooer Bass Distortion
112 Source Audio Soundblox 2 Bass Micromodeler

18
Bill Nash

worldmags

Bass Guitars you MUST PLAY

Behold 20 bass guitars that we've enjoyed playing – and we think you'll enjoy too...

The bass guitar market has never been in such healthy shape as it is today, we reckon. No matter what your budget or musical environment, there's a bass for you. At *Bass Guitar Magazine* we try to cover as wide a range of instrumentation as we can – whether it's cheap, expensive, fretted, fretless, acoustic, solid-bodied, four-string or extended range. Don't be misguided by the cost of these instruments alone: thanks to the evolution of mass production technology, a sub-£150 bass from India or Korea may well do its job as well as a much more expensive axe. Shop around before you buy: the UK is stocked with many great bass dealers, all of whom will be keen to help you secure the right bass.

The basses we've included here are not our selection of the best, or most affordable, or nicest-sounding instruments we've reviewed, or anything like that. They're simply bass guitars that we have played and enjoyed in recent years, no more and no less. There are hundreds of other models and dozens of other luthiers around: we simply suggest that you'll enjoy the experience of playing the ones included here. Dive in!

GLOSSARY

The vocabulary you'll need to peruse this guide to all things bass-related

Active
An active bass has a battery-powered EQ system that is notably boosted at the top and bottom end when compared to its passive equivalent.

Battery compartment
Where the battery lives, duh. Usually located on the back of the bass, necessitating questions like 'Where the hell is that screwdriver?'

Body
The main portion of the bass, with a neck, bridge and controls attached to it. Much is made by experts of the tonal qualities of the woods used for the body, and the concomitant impact of their use on a) the environment and b) your credit card.

Bolt-on
Where the neck joins the body, assuming separate components are used instead of a single, neck-through construction. Bolts used here number from four and continue upwards.

Boost
The option available on many basses to give the top or bottom end of the frequency range some extra muscle.

Bridge
The metal unit at the bottom of the bass where the strings slide in. These range from a simple piece of metal to a complex, tank-like structure.

'Bridge Of Sighs'
The curious metal cover fitted over a pickup on Rickenbackers and other traditional basses. Often removed from bass and thrown away after purchase.

Coil tap
The option with certain pickups to reduce the wiring in the live circuit, thus enabling a different sound.

'Dusty end'
An amusing title for the area of the fingerboard to the right of the 12th fret, implying that higher notes are rarely played. Not true if you play fusion.

EQ
The mix of bass, mid and treble frequencies in the your sound: also the controls available to adjust said mix. On bass guitars, EQ varies from a simple tone control to a vast array of switches and pots which require a PhD in astrophysics to navigate.

Fingerboard
That long strip of wood with frets on it, glued to the neck.

Fingerstyle
The act of playing bass with your fingers, rather than with a pick or plectrum. Both styles have their adherents: both sides secretly despise the other.

Fretted/fretless
Basses come with and without frets. With a fretless bass you can make interesting microtonal adjustments while the audience wonders why you're playing out of tune.

Headless
A bass which has no headstock: Status Graphite are the best-known. Big in the 80s.

Headstock
The big chunk of wood at the end of the neck which stops your hand sliding off.

Hipshot
A popular brand of detuner which allows you to instantly add greater range.

Humbucker
A pickup whose inner wiring system is designed to cancel the humming that sometimes accompanies the operation of standard systems.

Jamerson-style
A Motown-alike root/fourths/fifths bass-line played with great economy and melodic awareness, preferably fingerstyle, in the style of the late James Jamerson.

J-Bass
A Fender Jazz bass.

J-style
When used to describe a bass guitar neck, this means slim and highly playable.

Machine heads (also tuners)
The sticky-out metal things that change the pitch of the strings. As in, "If that guitarist bumps into my machine heads one more time, he's a dead man."

Neck
The long thin bit of the bass beneath the strings. Possibly the most important part of any bass, it determines how playable your instrument is.

Neck-through (or thru)
A bass body and neck formed from a single chunk of wood.

Passive
The opposite of active.

P-Bass
A Fender Precision, the first and for many, the greatest bass guitar invented.

P-style
Of a pickup, usually a split design with two offset units.

Pickup configuration
The number and layout of pickup units on your bass, from a single P-style pickup to a double single-coil set-up like a Jazz, or a single or double humbucker configuration.

Pop/popping
Pulling a string up with your finger and allowing it to snap back for a funky 'popped' effect.

Pot
The controls on your bass which determine your volume and tone. Also a substance which, when inhaled, makes your drummer play at ever decreasing tempos.

Register
Frequency: you can play notes in the upper, mid or lower registers.

Slap/slapping
Hitting a string with the edge of your thumb (or rarely, finger) so that it bounces rapidly off a fret.

Warwick celebrates back to back MIPA awards for the LWA series
MIPA for Best Bass Amplification 2014: Warwick LWA 1000
MIPA for Best Bass Amplification 2015: Warwick LWA 500
mipa 2014
mipa 2015
LWA 1000
LWA 500
WARWICK AMPLIFICATION
On behalf of everyone at Warwick we would like to thank all players and artists that rely on Warwick products. You make it happen.
Jonas Hellborg
Amp Designer &
Legendary Bassist
Hans Peter Wilfer
Warwick Founder
The first Carbon-Neutral Company in the Music Industry
Family Owned - Solar Powered - Sustainably Manufactured in a Green Environment
www.warwick.de shop.warwick.de
info@warwick.de www.facebook.de/warwickmusicdistribution
ClimatePartner
climate neutral
Instrument | ID: 11117-1212-1002
Basses, Amps&Rock'n Roll.
DEUTSCHE MANUFAKTUREN
Handmade-in-Germany
EMAS
ISO 50001

worldmags

Ibanez
BASS WORKSHOP
LIMITED EDITION
HEADSTOCK DISTRIBUTION
EMPOWERING MUSIC
www.headstockdistribution.com
Get Connected : Ibanez Guitars @ibanezofficial
ibanez.com
Ibanez

ACG MBL Finn 4

Joel Graham says it's as easy as ACG...

Great British Bass Lounge
www.greatbritishbasslounge.com

ACG, a one-man company based in Scotland whose first bass was commissioned in 2006, has produced this very beautiful, very unusual beast in conjunction with the Great British Bass Lounge. Our initial impression is that its design has been intended as a challenge to every bassist out there. With its asymmetrical neck and a zero-radius fretboard, it also houses a dual filter preamp, which at the slightest touch completely alters the bass's tone. Interested? You bet we are...

Build Quality

From the black walnut body with maple veneer right though to the wenge headplate via the Indian ebony fretboard, there is nothing about this bass that is not aesthetically pleasing. ACG's choices of manufacturing materials are complementary to its appearance, too, as is the black hardware for the Hipshot Type B bridge and tone pots. The neck is five-piece maple with a satin lacquer finish, and is as smooth as any neck I have previously played. Tasteful subtle side dots guide your playing, as there are no fret inlays of any kind, and this gives the whole board a silky feel. Finally, the wenge headstock, with its three-over-two black Gotoh tuners, tops off this fine-looking bass off with total class.

Sounds and Playability

You saw that I previously mentioned that this bass was built to challenge? Well, that it certainly does. From the moment you handle this instrument the usual thought processes kick in. "It's nice and light... the feel of the wood finish is fantastic... it really sits snugly on your lap." But then you start to play the familiar bass lick that you always play when you first pick up a new instrument, and suddenly you're aware that that everything is not what it seems.

The asymmetrical neck and zero-radius fretboard are the first challenge for a traditional J-Bass player like myself. At first, the feel of

worldmags

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £1495 (five-string version available for £1595)
COLOUR | Natural satin finish
BODY | Black walnut with maple veneer
NECK | Five-piece maple
NECK JOINT | Five-bolt
NECK FINISH | Satin lacquer
FINGERBOARD | Indian ebony
HEAD PLATE | Wenge
FRETS | 24
TUNERS | Gotoh GB7
BRIDGE | Hipshot Type B
PICKUPS | 2x ACG FB humbuckers
BUILT-IN PREAMP | ACG SEQ Dual Filter
CONTROLS | 3 (1x stacked volume/blend control, 2x pickup low-pass filters)

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Incredibly playable, wide tone range, taps superbly
MINUS | Requires adaptable players!
OVERALL | Unusual, and even experimental, the ACG is a new bass experience

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

the bass is unusual, but after a few minutes of adapting your playing style it begins to seem logical, and not in the slightest way daunting.

It's almost as if the bass is gradually remoulding your fretting hand to its neck and forcing you to alter your previous playing style. Your picking hand will start to feel the need to ease off and you'll start tapping the strings rather than plucking. It reminded me of taking my early driving lessons, when my instructor told me to dominate the car by being in control and not have the car drive the driver. In this case you'll really benefit by letting the bass drive the player.

Challenge number two comes with the ACG's dual filter preamp. The range of tones you can coax from the bass is vast: the tone pots alone are so sensitive that a nudge one millimetre in either direction totally changes the tone. The fun you'll have just alternating between pickups and the different tones is amazing: sustaining single notes using my fretting hand and twisting the tone pots created some fantastic natural synth-like effects. That said, you could be here a while if you're looking for a specific sound, due to the hypersensitivity of the tone pots: their range within a full turn is tremendous.

Potentially this could cause a headache if you're trying to reproduce pre-used tones, as there are no dotted indicators on the controls or on the bass body to use as references. I found it was best to slap at the base of the neck: the tones were full and fat sounding, and any closer to the pickups the tones became clunky due to the extreme sensitivity of the humbuckers. Unless your slapping technique is extremely gentle, this is the only zone where you can really go for it on this bass.

Finally, this bass will really appeal to tappers. The neck invites the player to walk their fingers up and down the neck at any speed, resulting in crystal-clear, punchy notes with absolutely stunning playability. The preamp powers the lightest of touches against the strings: you'll be a threat to your guitar player during any solo battles using this machine.

Conclusion

This ACG isn't a main bass for everybody due to its uncanny ability to change your playing style. However, it plays wonderfully once you figure out how it likes to be played. The bass tempts you into analysing everything you have learned about technique, and unlearning it for the duration of your time with it – but in a really positive way. If you're looking for a bass to tap on for the majority of the time, this is it – no question about it.

Jools Holland, Joe Bonamassa, Adele,
George Benson, Chaka Khan, BB King,
David Sanborn, Gregory Porter
and well, we could be here all day.......

BARNES & MULLINS
Voted the UK's 'Best Supplier'
2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 & 2014

worldmags

ANACONDA
Tribute J4E Elite, Crusher CXE6 Elite

There's a new, serpentine bass-maker on the block. Does this snake rattle, asks Mike Brooks?

Anaconda Basses
www.anacondabasses.co.uk

Anaconda Basses is a newly-formed company, fronted by Andrew Taylor-Cummings, a bass player himself. His Tribute and Crusher models are prime examples of the standard of instrument Andrew is creating at his workshop in North London, so how do they stack up?

Build Quality

Both basses look extremely elegant and have been crafted with great care and attention to detail: the timber selection, hardware and electronics choices have all been considered at some length. The Tribute model has obvious leanings towards Jazz bass territory while the Crusher has a fuller, rounded shape to offer a more comfortable playing experience.

Both basses utilise the same control layout (volume, pan, three-band EQ) and come equipped with the same Glockenklang circuit: specific pickups from Bartolini and Woodhead have been chosen to achieve a desired sound for each bass. Both basses come with series/parallel switches to offer further tonal switching capabilities: the parallel setting provides a more restrained delivery while switching to series mode boosts both the top and bottom end delivery and makes the midrange more pronounced.

The Tribute model is blinged to the max, with gold hardware, a brass handcut nut, Hipshot A-style brass bridge and machine heads and mother-of-pearl front position markers, but it all looks tasteful. The gloss finish shows off the honey-tinged 5A figured maple top, and the mix of timbers combine to create a truly stunning bass, topped off by the wooden covers used on the Woodhead pickups. The rounded neck profile feels like the perfect combination of a Precision and a Jazz, and the fret ends have been rolled smooth. With only the slightest camber to the fingerboard, this is one sleek, fast neck. The body is a standard thickness and depth but the contouring and chambered core give the bass a sensible weight, which makes it balance extremely well.

As a six-string with a 35" scale, the Crusher is inevitably larger and slightly heavier but it still balances well. The gloss finished swamp ash body is capped with a 4A figured maple top, which contrasts well with the black hardware, and this has also been applied to the matching headstock. The maple and wenge neck laminates also add to the naturally organic look of the instrument. This bass features Andrew's favoured quartersawn wenge fingerboard (for looks and tone) and although the fingerboard feels broad as you would expect, the depth and rear profile of the neck and the 19mm string spacing help to make this a comfortable playing machine. Wearing the bass, you can feel it resonate: the harmonic response and character come across immediately.

> "THERE IS NO DISPUTING THE CALIBRE OF BOTH BASSES, AND ANDREW SHOULD BE CONGRATULATED ON THE HIGH STANDARD HE HAS ACHIEVED WITH BOTH INSTRUMENTS"

Sounds and Playability

The Tribute model is amazingly responsive and an absolute joy to play. There are plenty of modern sounds on offer, but also a good selection of traditional tones that aren't so EQ-dependent. Andrew has obviously done his homework, creating a bass that takes inspiration from the perennial Jazz but elaborates on its best qualities, creating a superb instrument in the process. There is plenty of mid and top end sparkle should you need it, but backing it up is a solid and powerful bottom end. The mid control offers a dramatic scoop, but leaving it flat or boosted slightly shows how much tonal spring this bass has. The pickups have been wound to Andrew's specification and the offset pole pieces sense a wider area of resonance, which results in a fuller, punchier sound than you might expect.

Should you find the EQ a little overpowering, trim pots can be found in the control cavity to wind in some of the excess on offer. The passive performance is strong in its own right and this is helped by the inclusion of the vintage tone control, but setting the pickup switches to series and kicking in the active circuit is when this bass really shines. With its hybrid Jazz body shape and a useful level of body chamfering and contouring, you may find this bass hard to put down.

The Crusher has a piano-like tone and every note is well defined and consistent across the whole neck. The low B string is particularly forthright, the low notes really standing out, while the high C sounds full and bright in equal measure. Naturally, the timber choices contribute to the woody tones, but the electronics package helps to show off the finer qualities this bass possesses. Every tone you could wish for in a six-string bass is on offer here. The set-up contributes to the exceptional playability, while the overall tonal performance is crisp, defined and pleasing. Although some players may be put off by the six-string concept, this could well be the exception that converts you.

Conclusions

There is no disputing the calibre of both basses, and Andrew should be congratulated on the high standard he has achieved with both instruments. Tonally and visually, these are excellent examples of his work and anyone looking for a new bass in this price range would be well advised to add Anaconda Basses to their list.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

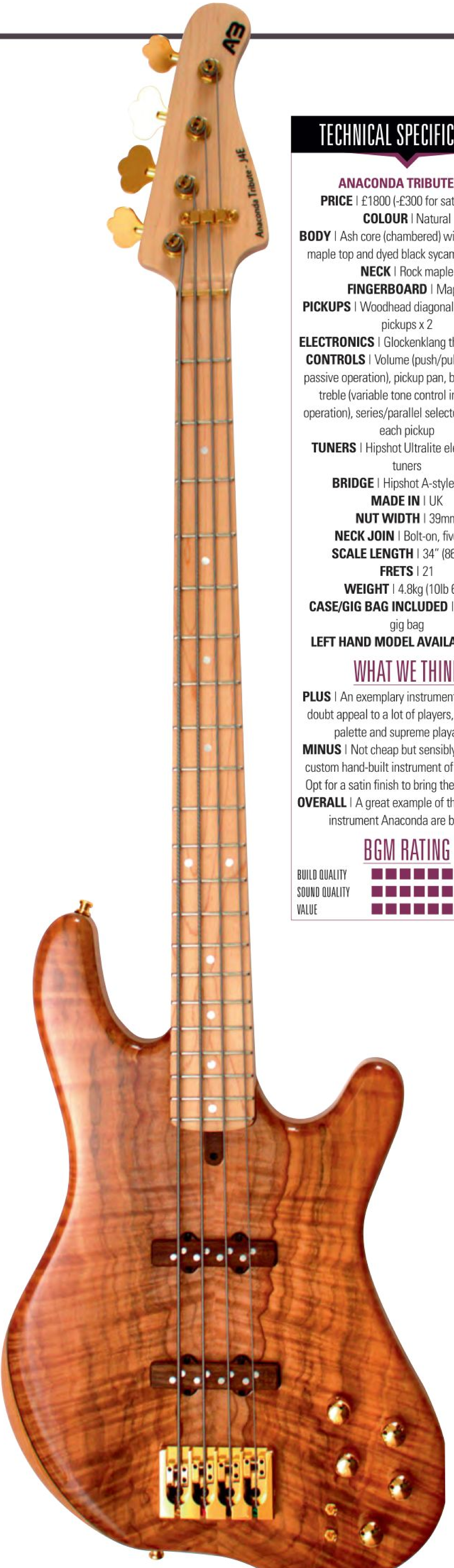
ANACONDA CRUSHER CXE6
PRICE | £2199 (-£300 for satin finish)
COLOUR | Natural
BODY | Ash with flame/quilted maple top and dyed black sycamore veneer
NECK | Maple
FINGERBOARD | Wenge
PICKUPS | Bartolini soapbar pickups x 2
ELECTRONICS | Glockenklang three-band EQ
CONTROLS | Volume (push/pull for active/passive operation), pickup pan, bass, middle, treble (variable tone control in passive operation), series/parallel selector switch for each pickup
TUNERS | Hipshot Ultralite
BRIDGE | Hipshot A-style brass
MADE IN | UK
NUT WIDTH | 55mm
NECK JOIN | Bolt-on, six bolt
SCALE LENGTH | 35" (889mm)
FRETS | 24
WEIGHT | 5kg (11lbs 1oz)
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED | Soft case/gig bag
LEFT HAND MODEL AVAILABLE | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A very playable six-string bass, handbuilt with plenty of tonal options – a harmonically rich and resonant bass
MINUS | Some may find the scale and body size a little restrictive but it's a six-string bass, it's par for the course
OVERALL | A desirable six-string with enough tonal prowess to cope with any musical situation

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ANACONDA TRIBUTE J4E
PRICE | £1800 (-£300 for satin finish)
COLOUR | Natural
BODY | Ash core (chambered) with 5A figured maple top and dyed black sycamore veneer
NECK | Rock maple
FINGERBOARD | Maple
PICKUPS | Woodhead diagonal J single coil pickups x 2
ELECTRONICS | Glockenklang three-band EQ
CONTROLS | Volume (push/pull for active/passive operation), pickup pan, bass, middle, treble (variable tone control in passive operation), series/parallel selector switch for each pickup
TUNERS | Hipshot Ultralite elephant ear tuners
BRIDGE | Hipshot A-style brass
MADE IN | UK
NUT WIDTH | 39mm
NECK JOIN | Bolt-on, five bolt
SCALE LENGTH | 34" (864mm)
FRETS | 21
WEIGHT | 4.8kg (10lb 6oz)
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED | Soft case/gig bag
LEFT HAND MODEL AVAILABLE | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | An exemplary instrument that will no doubt appeal to a lot of players, great tonal palette and supreme playability
MINUS | Not cheap but sensibly priced for a custom hand-built instrument of this quality. Opt for a satin finish to bring the price down
OVERALL | A great example of the standard of instrument Anaconda are building

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

worldmags

BC RICH
Paolo Gregoletto Warlock

Trivium's Paolo Gregoletto has a tasty-looking through-neck bass, all right. But is the budget bolt-on version even remotely as good?

Rosetti Ltd
www.bcrich.com

Let's not kid ourselves here. You're either looking at this bass and thinking, 'Whoa! That's the coolest thing I've ever seen,' or you're thinking, 'How juvenile would you have to be to stand onstage with one of those, let alone buy one?' (There may be one or two odd people among you who are also thinking, 'I could catch a snake with that,' but we'll let that pass.)

Yes, the BC Rich Warlock is one of the most metallically spiky instruments of a generally rather metallic and spiky range, and ever since Florida metallers Trivium rose to international prominence a few years ago, the company has been supplying Paolo Gregoletto with a signature model. His previous white one has now been replaced by this natural-finish successor, and here's the affordable model for the kids.

Body and Neck

When required to play technical metal of the type that Trivium have been delivering for several3 albums now, the last thing you need is a chunky neck covered in sticky lacquer, and BC Rich – specialists in shredder-friendly guitars since the 1970s – has as ever gone in the opposite direction. This neck, a high-speed flattened C-profile made of maple, has the lightest of finishes – when *BGM* interviewed Paolo and had a strum on his high-end model, the neck was completely unfinished and as smooth as Phil Collins's head. The folks at BC Rich haven't gone quite as far with this version, adding a touch of protective material to keep it from getting dented in the back of your Transit, but nonetheless you get the feeling that the neck is practically naked, matron. This gives it a zippy, highly playable feel that makes you want to run up to the highest frets and solo – helped along by the deep lower cutaway that goes as far as the 23rd fret. Up there the neck is so flattened that it feels almost vertical. Very nice indeed.

As for the Warlock's famous asymmetrical body, BC Rich should really have offered the option to have it in a Marmite-coloured finish, such is the rift that the slightly nutty shape causes among bass players. Naysayers point to the fact that the thing doesn't stand up straight when you lean it against your 8x15" megacab, edging sideways and ultimately resting on the E tuner, which puts it out of tune, obviously. They also point to the classic BC Rich bugbear, which is that the guitar's massive headstock causes the instrument to dive head first towards the floor when you strap it on and stand up. The latter isn't much of an issue with this particular model, although you may still be wary of grabbing the mic with both hands when you're shouting 'Are you ready to mosh, Peterborough?' in case it slides down a bit and you look a bit like a clock with a wooden minute hand.

But there's no denying the build quality of the body, whatever you think of its shape. The maple finish is as smooth as silk (this reviewer's wife said it reminded her of a Caramac ... Women and their chocolate fixation, eh?), and the points, while deadly-looking, aren't actually sharp enough to hurt anyone (although yes, you might just catch a snake with them).

ABM ON TOUR THIS SUMMER.
"For years I was frustrated because my band is really loud, in order to compete at that volume... all other amps would just fall apart. The Ashdown didn't. I can turn it up to compete with those guys and still have the tone stay together."
Nate Mendel
FOO FIGHTERS
"Ashdown allows me to create a sound that I just can't achieve with other amps."
Shavo Odadjian
SYSTEM OF A DOWN
Ashdown Engineering
"The look, the tone, it was everything I wanted from a bass rig & more. Its great to feel part of a family company something you don't see a lot of these days. I will never use another amp."
Ross MacDonald
THE 1975
"I was always searching for that big warm natural sound that wasn't very complicated. The first time I saw Pino Palladino playing one I was like, whatever that guys playing... thats what I'm having."
Brian Ray
SIR PAUL MCCARTNEY
"It took me forever to dial in where I could find a bass head I could really love. The minute I plunged into the Ashdown, set everything to about 12 noon, I was like... thats how I hear bass."
Nick Harmer
DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE
ABM
EVO IV
WWW.ASHDOWNMUSIC.COM
#spotthevu

worldmags

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £458.55
MADE IN | China
SCALE LENGTH | 34"
FRETS | 24
NECK | Maple, bolt-on
FINGERBOARD | Ebony
BODY | Mahogany with spalted maple veneer and white binding
PICKUPS | 2 x BDSM bass humbuckers
TUNERS | BC Rich die-cast
CONTROLS | 2 x volume, master tone
BRIDGE | Adjustable stop
COLOURS | Natural
WEIGHT | 3kg

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Highly playable, simple controls, effective tone range.
MINUS | Pointy body confines it to metal players.
OVERALL | For this price it would be difficult to magic up a better metal bass…

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

"THIS IS A WHOLE LOT OF BASS FOR A RELATIVELY PALTRY SUM OF MONEY"

Hardware and Parts

This is a budget instrument, right? So don't expect high-end hardware made of platinum and decorated with moon rocks and frankincense. However, what you do get is a very solid and dependable-feeling set of tools, from the own-brand tuners (firm but responsive) via the bridge (compact but chunky) and the controls (simple but slinky). The details are all taken care of, with the truss rod cover bearing Gregoletto's signature, and the rear battery compartment and even the strap buttons all adequate.

The luxury version of this bass has a very tasty innovation in the form of an unfalloffable (that's a word, right?) strap lock design: the strap doesn't actually attach to the body of the bass, it connects via a simple press-lock gizmo to two pre-attached lengths of strap that are already locked immovably onto the body. However, that's one sacrifice that BC Rich has clearly had to make in order to get this bass out for this number of quids – and it's hardly essential. That said, if you've always wanted to spin your instrument around your body like Steve Vai, make sure you add some strap locks before doing so… or just invest in Paolo's own, more expensive model.

Sounds

Our man Gregoletto chooses not to fiddle about with the tone controls on his own version of the Warlock. Instead, he flips them all to maximum output, allowing his EMG pickups to spit out as much signal as they like; that way he doesn't need to tweak his sound too much, as a natural bit of overdrive is added by the bass itself. Now, this clearly is not that high-end bass, and these are clearly not active EMGs – what we have here is a pair of perfectly serviceable BDSM humbuckers. With its output modulated by a master tone control and a volume pot for each pickup, the Warlock has a range that isn't quite as outrageous as equivalently priced basses by, say, Kramer but still has plenty of mids for that all-important modern metal tone. Back in the day, say in 1987, heavy rock players such as Duff McKagan required oodles of top end in their sound, and to an extent this filtered through to the metal world, but nowadays sanity has returned (sort of) and today's major rager likes his/her tone to be middy rather than honky. Sorry about the technical terms. There's stacks of low end, though, so when your guitarist strolls casually up to you and says, 'Dude, we're like tuning down to A for this totally rad new song. Can your bass, like, totally handle it?' (even though he's from Macclesfield) you know you'll be able to deliver the goods.

Conclusion

This is a whole lot of bass for a relatively paltry sum of money. For the same price as a couple of visits to Tesco for an average family, or a tour's worth of strings, or a few hundred tubes of Smarties (hey, whatever works for you is fine by us), you too could be rocking a Warlock in a wallet-unweakening thrifty manner. It plays beautifully, delivers a usable range of tone options and is made of components that are unlikely to let you down unless someone pours beer into the pickups – don't laugh, it happens. Splendid work all round, we say.

worldmags

BILL NASH
PB-57

Dave Thorpe tackles Bill Nash's latest aged P-Bass

Bill Nash Guitars
www.nashguitars.com

Products from the renowned American luthier Bill Nash are rarely seen in the UK. However, well-known bassists such as Glenn Hughes swear by them, so it's great to get our hands on one for review. Nash, who produces about 90 guitars and basses per month, excels at classic body shapes with aged finishes, using traditional construction methods with a modern twist. On first sight, this PB-57 seems to offer a lot of bass for its mid-market price point: let's give it a spin.

Build Quality

A close inspection of the PB-57 is rewarded with quality in all the right places. Its perfectly weighted ash body meets a contoured maple neck, with a near-perfect fretting and action. The timber choices are typically traditional, but it's clear that stringent quality and selection control procedures are in place to ensure the best examples are employed on this example. The body looks like a two-piece construction, but is so well matched that it could easily be mistaken for a single piece. The neck pocket and fit is seamless, with the trusty four-screw scenario in place; the aged maple neck is fitted with well-finished and rounded 6105 fretwire. Gotoh is the hardware of choice and is also aged.

A one-piece gold anodised scratchplate holds the pickups and control knobs together atop the nitrocellulose-finished body, with a beautiful, understated three-tone sunburst. The volume controls allow separate volume and tone adjustment on each of the concentric pots, reminiscent of Fender's stack-knob '62 Jazz. Lollar provide the pickups for our review model, although Nash also fit Dimarzio as well as Seymour Duncan

WE HAVE MOVED

152-154 HOXTON STREET, LONDON, N1 6SH.

ANDY BAXTER BASS AND GUITARS LTD

THE UK'S LARGEST SELECTION OF VINTAGE BASS GUITARS

MOBILE: +44 (0) 7904 227517 T: 0207 033 4130 EMAIL: sales@andybaxterbass.com

VINTAGE 6 STRING GUITARS AND AMPS NOW IN STOCK

WWW.ANDYBAXTERBASS.COM

@AndyBaxterBass | /AndyBaxterBass

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £1,300 approx
MADE IN | USA
BODY | Ash
NECK | Maple, bolt-on
FINGERBOARD | Maple
SCALE LENGTH | 34"
CONTROLS | Two volume, two tone on 250k concentric pots
HARDWARE | Gotoh
PICKUPS | Lollar
WEIGHT | 4.2kg
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED | Case
LEFT HAND VERSION AVAILABLE | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A super-playable, well-constructed instrument that delivers great tone and sounds. You will want to keep picking this bass up again and again

MINUS | The Jazz pickup could do with a little more output, and the aged finish may not appeal to everyone

OVERALL | The PB-57 proves that traditional basses don't have to have a brand name beginning with F or G on the headstock. Nash's take on the old school bass is excellent at this price point

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■□
SOUND QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■□
VALUE ■■■■■■■■■□

sets, and the height and adjustment of the pickups feels well executed. As for Nash's handmade finish, bumps, dinks and scratches are evident throughout the neck and body: you can order various stages of ageing, from a light relic such as the finish on this bass, through to much heavier treatments.

Sounds and Playability

Even before plugging in the Nash, its acoustic feel and resonance is quite something. The PB-57 is instantly comfortable: it feels like a bass that you've been playing for years. The C-shaped neck profile is easy to get around, with a chunky but fast feel. On plugging in, the Lollar P pickup offers the expected well-rounded, full sound with a deep and resonant tone. Add in the tone control, which is the outer of the two knobs on the concentric pot, and you gain different levels of attack, which cut through nicely. The string spacing lends itself well to pick, fingers or slap: it's a real all-rounder. The Jazz pickup isn't quite as powerful, as you'd expect, but its does produce some honking tones from the bridge. On its own, this unit doesn't seem quite as versatile, but both pickups work well together. The end result is pretty close to the best of both worlds in one instrument.

Conclusion

There are plenty of repro classics on the market competing for your hard-earned cash, and the PB-57 is a serious contender. Produced with serious quality in mind at an attractive ticket price, time has been taken to ensure that this bass arrives at the dealer ready to go, with a fantastic setup, every note ringing out and delivering warm and clear sounds with a familiar feel. If this is how every Nash bass plays off the peg, there are good things ahead for the company.

AB
ANACONDA BASSES
Constrictor - CSE5 - Elite
Crusher CXE5 - Elite
TONE MONSTERS
Anaconda Basses
@anacondabasses
07904 180 699
www.anacondabasses.com

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £850
MADE IN | Korea
BODY | Mahogany Back and sides Western Red Cedar Top
NECK | Mahogany
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
INLAYS | Abalone
SCALE | 34"
NUT WIDTH | 1⅝"
FRETS | 22
TUNERS | Chrome Grover
BRIDGE | Pinless/Rosewood
PICKUPS | LR Baggs Stage Pro with Tuner
CONTROLS | Vol/Bass/Mid/Treble. Notch Filter, Phase and Tuner
HARDWARE | Chrome
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED | Yes
LEFT HAND MODEL AVAILABLE | No

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Loud, and sounds acoustic even plugged in
MINUS | The sound is a tad muddy when played hard
OVERALL | A solidly built acoustic bass guitar, with bags of volume

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□

BREEDLOVE

Atlas Series Solo BJ350 CMe4

A 'monitor' soundport aids audibility to the player, but will Breedlove's mid-price contender make enough noise to get the world's attention?

Breedlove
www.breedlovemusic.com

Since the 70s, Breedlove's distinctive designs have carved themselves a niche in the acoustic guitar world, and their shape, with its acute cutaway and tapering headstock, has become iconic. In an attempt to widen the appeal of the brand, Breedlove now has some of its guitars built in Korea, among them the Atlas series. Like the hand-built, USA-made instruments, these are designed by Kim Breedlove and manufactured under close scrutiny.

Build Quality

Breedlove made their name in the 80s with bold, modern designs such as this one. The slim upper bout, steep cutaway and angular, tapered headstock are Breedlove touchstones, and the BJ350 has the brand written all over it. The CMe4 denotes a cedar top, which in this case is not particularly evenly grained – much wider at the edges of the soundboard than towards the middle, where it approaches spruce for fineness. A simple abalone soundhole inlay and narrow black and white multilayer binding are enough to complement the rich amber of the cedar. Back and sides are of mahogany-veneered laminate – handsome enough, though not particularly highly figured. The neck is a three-piece nato item, perfectly matched to the veneer on the back and sides, and ending in that trademark headstock, faced in what appears to be rosewood. This is topped with a rosewood fingerboard with Breedlove's assymetrical dot position markers, alternating sides depending whether they are above or below the 12th of the 23 jumbo frets.

What really makes the BJ350 stand out is, of course, the soundport. Situated on the lower bout, just below the waist, and shaped like a plectrum, it's designed to act like a monitor, giving the player a clearer and louder signal even when playing unplugged. It's easy for an acoustic bass to get drowned in the mix when unplugged, so a little boost can make all the difference.

The Atlas's bridge is another Breedlove trademark: rosewood, rear-loading for ease of restringing, with a Tusq saddle, matching the Tusq nut. At the north end of the neck there are four unbranded closed-back tuners. The Atlas is equipped with an LR Baggs Element Stage Pro pickup system, which pairs an excellent undersaddle piezo with a head unit containing a volume control, three-band EQ, notch filter, phase switch and a hidden tuner.

Sounds and Playability

The presence of the soundport makes it hard, from the player's point of view, to compare the tone of the Atlas to other acoustic basses. What's for sure is it's very loud, even compared to Breedlove's other, notably loud acoustics. The tone, as one might expect from a cedar top, is warm and full, but that warmth is bolstered by a surprisingly punchy undertone. This might be the laminate at work; it typically provides a powerful, very direct tone and contributes little by way of harmonic warmth and richness. The combination of loud and complex is an interesting one: driven hard, the tone tends to muddy a little and become unfocused, but played lightly it's warm and pretty. Perhaps that's the point: a bass which can produce a fat, complex tone without being hammered and still be loud enough to be audible.

This bias to the J-Bass end of the spectrum colours the style you want to play on the Atlas; despite the volume and underlying punch, it doesn't invite really upfront playing. Plugging in, the volume can become overwhelming. The LR Baggs pickup is capable of punching out impressively high volumes without suffering feedback, especially after a judicious tweak of the notch filter, but once you reach the threshold on an acoustic bass its vengeance is swift and painful to the ears. The pickup is admirably transparent, the warm and complex tone of the bass coming through nicely, though the three-band EQ gives you ample scope to shape the tone if that's what you want to do, and the phase shift and notch filter should equip you to deal with any PA challenge. The action is a trifle high, but this is easily rectified, and if you want to play intricate stuff on the upper frets, you may find it necessary.

Conclusion

Retailing for around £1,000, the Atlas differentiates itself effectively from the Passport series. Tonally woody and warm, it's unmistakably acoustic even when plugged in, and pumps out enough volume to keep up with the guitars. Some players may find the fatness of the tone limiting, but if it's what you're looking for, the Breedlove delivers it in spades.

worldmags

CORT
Rithimic

Joel McIver puts Jeff Berlin's new signature Cort through its paces. Thumbs aloft!

Proel (International) Ltd
www.proel.co.uk

No, we don't know what 'Rithimic' means either, but let's not sweat the small stuff. Having witnessed *BGM* contributor and all-round bass legend Jeff Berlin in action many times and having gained a keen awareness of the great man's style and gear preferences, we're keen to give his new Cort a try-out, whatever its name. At £799 it comes at a surprisingly low price point for a bassist of Jeff's calibre; most signature bass guitars come in too-cheap and too-expensive versions, so it'll be interesting to gauge the playability of a bass which occupies that sweet spot in the middle. Let's have it!

Build Quality

Lift the Rithimic out of its case and that red and gold finish fair frazzles your eyeballs. It's pretty spectacular, and while we rather like it here at *BGM's* secret rural lair, bassists with different tastes may not agree. It also comes loaded with gold bling in the form of the bridge, controls and tuners, which we think look pretty amazing, but again, who are we to judge? You may think red, gold and, er, more gold is just vulgar. We'll have to agree to disagree.

However, we think everyone will agree on the actual mechanical quality of the Rithimic. With a body top made of seriously beautiful woods – spalted maple and padouk, yum! – and glossed to the finest possible level, this bass demands that you give it a stroke. The controls turn firmly and smoothly, with that essential centre detente which is so useful that we wonder why all luthiers don't employ it. The Hipshot machine heads operate in that nice non-jerky way that expensive hardware tends to provide, while the tank-like Babicz bridge is a thing of industrial precision. Run a finger along the fret edges and you won't feel a single edge. No arguments here: the Rithimic is made to the highest standards.

Sounds and Playability

Jeff is famous for his preference for simplicity, playing four-string passive basses without the usual dozens of controls that high-spec instruments so often offer. This makes the Rithimic a straightforward review item: dial up a few tones, explore the range and you're left with the job at hand – actually playing it.

The neck shape and finish are firmly in the middle of the usual parameters: not too glossy but not actually frictionless, slim in profile but not overly shreddy, with plenty of access to the 21 frets (Two octaves? Be off with you!) at the dusty end – not that it'll remain dusty for long if you play anything like Jeff does.

Cort have given the Rithimic a simple volume/tone/balance control configuration which comes as a breath of fresh air to us, having spent years playing basses with a million knobs and switches.

> "IT'S EASY TO RECOMMEND THE RITHIMIC. EMINENTLY PLAYABLE AND BOASTING THE FULL RANGE OF TONES — UNLESS, AS WE SAW, YOUR PREFERRED SOUND IS SUPER, SUPER TREBLY"

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £799
MADE IN | Indonesia
BODY | Alder, spalted maple and padouk top
FINISH | Rithimic Natural
NECK | Maple
NECK JOIN | Bolt-on
SCALE | 34"
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
FRETS | 21
TUNERS | Hipshot Ultralight
PICKUPS | 2 x Bartolini Jeff Berlin Custom Soapbar Dual Coil Humbuckers
CONTROLS | Volume, tone, balance
BRIDGE | Babicz FCH4
WEIGHT | 3.9kg
LEFT-HAND VERSION AVAILABLE? | No

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Unputdownable! The Rithimic will make you feel twice as good a bassist as you actually are
MINUS | The body finish might not be for everyone; not great for super-trebly sounds
OVERALL | For 800 quid, you'll have a tough job finding a better bass

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

For a change, let's start by rolling off all the top end and seeing what the Cort can deliver. Depending on the pickup balance of course, you're provided with a subtle, woody tone that is perfect for fingerstyle and is not remotely muddy or 'hidden'. Allow the top end to breathe a bit, with a tweak of the tone control towards that central detente, and you enter more extravagant territory, with a touch of honk coming into the sound. Whack the treble right up and the Rithimic gives you a crisp, front and centre tone that rewards pick and slap playing. As a passive instrument, it doesn't supply that glassy, zingy, ear-bleeding, smashed-crockery sound that some players like, so be warned if that's what you're after. Instead, the Cort gives you a respectable amount of trebly zing and no more.

However, this doesn't detract a jot from the fun you'll have playing it with its maximum top end dialled in. The Rithimic pretty much demands that you give it a slap, hitting back at your thumb and finger-pops with enthusiasm. Its overall tone is definitely biased towards the honk, so slappers will have a field day with it. Fingerstyle is a joy too.

Conclusion

It's easy to recommend the Rithimic. Eminently playable and boasting the full range of tones – unless, as we saw, your preferred sound is super, super trebly – this bass does its job with great panache at a surprisingly affordable price. Packed with quality and making the art of bass easier for anyone in need of a sympathetic instrument, this is one of the friendliest instruments we've tackled in ages.

worldmags

DINGWALL
Super P

Fanned frets: love them or hate them, they're here to stay. Kev Sanders gives his fingers a workout with Dingwall's latest beauty

Bass Direct
www.bassdirect.co.uk

Although they've been around for over 15 years, playing a Dingwall bass was for a long time a bit of a minority sport. The problem was those trademark fanned frets, an idea first patented by luthier Ralph Novak in 1989. It always seemed like an interesting idea, but some thought that they represented a solution to a problem that didn't really exist. The concept behind the fanned frets is that by positioning an instrument's nut and bridge saddles at opposite angles, what you're doing in effect is giving each string its own scale length; longer for the low strings and shorter for the higher. This means that each string can be set to its optimum tension when tuned to pitch – and that means a better sounding bass.

It's not surprising that it's taken some time for the idea to gain momentum, but in the last few years more and more high-profile bass players – Lee Sklar and Dave Swift among them – have started using Dingwalls. Slowly, the bass-playing community has started to sit up and take notice. Let's give this one a shot...

Build Quality

Everything about this bass is super-high quality, starting with the timbers. The Precision-shaped body is made from light, even-grained swamp ash with a glossy, translucent off-white finish – it's flawless. The slim neck is pale maple, again of the very best quality and finished to a soft satin sheen. Topping the neck is a birdseye maple fretboard. This is quite an unusual choice for a fingerboard (although some StingRays have it), but it looks stunning and the colour perfectly matches that of the neck, with the change in grain pattern one of the few clues that the fretboard is in fact a separate piece of timber.

Dingwalls were always beautifully made and it's good to see that, despite the increased popularity and demand for these basses, they've maintained the high standards that they set themselves right from the beginning. The four-bolt neck join is a good example of this: perfectly executed with the hex-screws countersunk and positioned in a way that mirrors the angled frets, bridge and nut.

The overwound neodymium pickups are exclusive to Dingwall and comprise a PP in neck position and an FD3 at the bridge. The chunky bridge is also a lovely piece of design, an object lesson in form and function, with easy adjustment for action and string length and, like the pickups, is custom-made. The rest of the fixtures and fittings, like the traditional black/white/black scratchplate and cloverleaf Hipshot HB6 tuners, all add to the understated retro vibe, although a nod to modernity is the D-Tuner on the E string.

Sounds and Playability

The controls on this bass are worth explaining in detail. This is an elegant, versatile system which quickly allows you to set the exact

Warwick®
CUSTOM SHOP
MASTERBUILT • HANDCRAFTED IN GERMANY
STREAMER LX
The first Carbon-Neutral Company in the Music Industry
Family Owned - Solar Powered - Sustainably Manufactured in a Green Environment
www.warwick.de shop.warwick.de
info@warwick.de www.facebook.de/warwickmusicdistribution
ClimatePartner
climate neutral
Instrument | ID: 11117-1212-1002
Warwick®
Basses, Amps & Rock'n Roll.
DEUTSCHE MANUFAKTUREN
Handmade-in-Germany
EMAS
GEPRÜFTES UMWELTMANAGEMENT
ISO 50001

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £2,750
BODY | 2 piece swamp ash
NECK | 5 piece maple
FINGERBOARD | Birdseye maple
CONTROLS | Passive, volume, pickup select, tone
SCRATCHPLATES | Black/white/black
TUNERS | Hipshot HB6
PICKUPS | Dingwall PP and FD3
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED? | Hard case included

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Dare to be different. The fanned fret system takes a little time to get used to, but the payback is a quality to the low end which you'll soon wonder how you ever did without
MINUS | Not sure about the Star Trek logo string tree, or the black plastic control knobs
OVERALL | Top-notch build quality and hardware: a fantastic bass that makes some other instruments around this price seem positively old fashioned

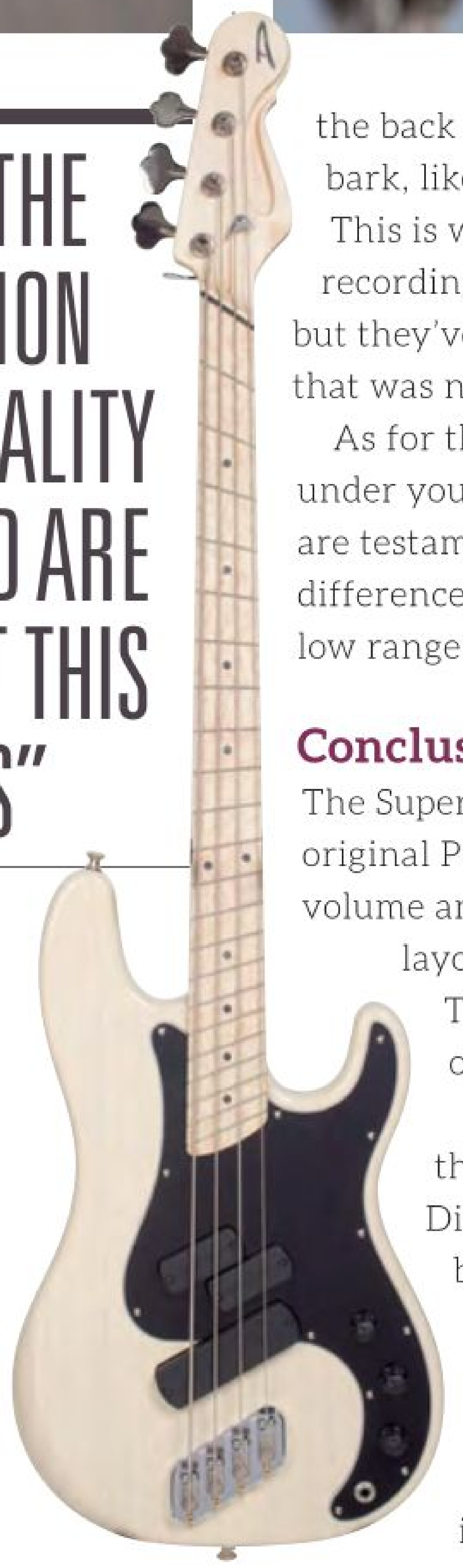
BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

"AS FOR THE FANNED FRETS? THE EVENNESS OF THE STRING TENSION UNDER YOUR FINGERS AND THE QUALITY AND FOCUS OF THE BOTTOM END ARE TESTAMENT TO THE FACT THAT THIS SYSTEM WORKS"

tone that you want. Firstly, like more and more top-end basses these days, it's passive, so there are no batteries or EQ boost, but the quality of the tonewoods, construction and electronics mean that there's absolutely no need for them. The front control is volume and the back a master tone. Between these is the notched pickup selector. In its first position, fully clockwise, this selects the front pickup alone; one click back is the front plus the back pickup in series, then in parallel; and finally, the back pickup on its own.

I can't overstate just how much versatility this gives you, although you'll soon find your favourite tones, two of mine being the front pickup with the back in series and



the back pickup alone. The latter gives you an awesome dark, woody bark, like a priceless vintage Jazz heard through big studio monitors. This is what makes this bass such a great instrument for the recording bassist: it has all of those classic Precision and Jazz tones, but they've been brought bang up to date, with a weight to the low end that was never there on those old 60s instruments.

As for the fanned frets? The evenness of the string tension under your fingers and the quality and focus of the bottom end are testament to the fact that this system works. It makes a real difference, particularly when you're using the D-Tuner to extend the low range. No complaints here.

Conclusion

The Super P design is in part the result of the success of Dingwall's original P-Bass. That instrument, with its single pickup plus passive volume and tone control, was appreciated for its common-sense layout, quality feel and (perhaps most of all) its fantastic tone. The P/J takes that basic premise, but adds to it the versatility of a split-coil pickup in the bridge position.

This is first and foremost a player's instrument. I don't think it's coincidental that the bassists who first recognised Dingwall's potential were not soloists or technique specialists, but session guys who play and record bass day in, day out. These people need a versatile instrument that will deliver the finest quality sound, be comfortable to play and remain straightforward to use. The Dingwall Super P ticks all those boxes, and you can expect to see a lot more of them around in the future.

worldmags

ENFIELD LIONHEART
English Rose 4 and 5

A Rose by any other name, you say? Joel McIver plucks two super-souped-up Enfields

Enfield
www.enfieldguitars.com

You may recall the coverage we gave the Enfield range a year or so ago, when the veteran Brit luthiers brought out their new Lionheart Standard bass range and Super-Quad pickup system. We were highly impressed with both, and here we have a couple of top-of-the-range, extras-packed Lionhearts to kick off the new year with.

Note that you don't have to spend over £3,000 to bag yourself a Lionheart: these two beauties are deliberately loaded with extras to allow us to experience everything that the Enfield range can do. If you don't need all the extra bells and whistles, you'll be very happy with a 'basic' Lionheart, which comes in at £1,650 (four-string) and £1,890 (five-string). Enfield will be happy to build a custom bass for you with all, some or none of the extra features included in this review. Think of it as a pizza with custom toppings, except a few hundred times more expensive and way cooler when worn around your neck.

Build Quality

Our review models are both based around sublime bits of wood for body and neck, engineered and finished to perfection and eminently strokeable straight out of the bass. Pick either bass up and you'll note its

> "PERFECTLY BALANCED ON STRAP OR LAP, THESE BASSES OOZE QUALITY AT ALL POINTS, AS INDEED THEY SHOULD FOR THIS PRICE"

weight: it isn't so hefty that it'll do you an injury, but players in search of a lightweight bass should look elsewhere. Perfectly balanced on strap or lap, these basses ooze quality at all points, as indeed they should for this price.

As always, it's not just the wood that impresses us when we're reviewing bass guitars, although the sleek mahogany and rosewood used here are obviously crucial. True craftsmanship comes through when details such as the battery compartment, the 'English Rose' inlay text and the remarkably smooth and solid tuners and bridge are taken care of. The Hipshot gold hardware and controls exude a kind of extrovert showy-offness that we love, although – like the amazing LEDs on the side and face of the neck – these cosmetic elements are entirely down to your own taste. Talking of those LEDs, be aware that they cost £580, a lot of money for pure aesthetics. But what the hell, they're lovely…

Sounds and Playability

Before you even plug in, what fun you can have with the LEDs, which light the bass up like a Christmas tree, especially if you draw the curtains. How great they'd look on stage at the O2… if your band ever made it that far… Wait, stop dreaming for a second and get down to business.

The controls here are master volume with passive option when pulled, an active bass/treble and mid boost/cut preamp with the bass and treble stacked on one pot. Before we get into the active mode, and indeed the three options for each pickup, have a play in passive mode. Unboosted,

The revenge of all those trees that fell in the forest but were never heard

Model Shown: Euro 5LX Poplar Burl

BARNES & MULLINS
Voted the UK's 'Best Supplier'
2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 & 2014

Spector®
Stuart Spector. Designing Original Basses since 1977

worldmags

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £3,288, £3,528
Made in | UK
BODY | Mahogany core, rosewood top and back
NECK | Rosewood with front and side LEDs
NECK JOINT | Bolt-on, five-screw
NUT WIDTH | 43mm, 51mm
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
FRETS | 24
PICKUPS | Sims Super-Quad x 2 with three-way configuration switches
ELECTRONICS | Three-band Glockenklang preamp
CONTROLS | Volume (push/pull active/passive mode), active bass/treble, mid boost/cut, LEDs on/off switch
HARDWARE | Hipshot gold
WEIGHT | 3.5kg, 3.8kg
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED | Yes
LEFT-HAND OPTION AVAILABLE | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Where to start? These basses are close to flawless
MINUS | Do you really need all those tone options?
OVERALL | Gorgeous instruments that cost the earth, with high-quality features that repay that cost with state-of-the-art tone and playability

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

the Lionheart sounds solid, reliable and relatively wide-ranging in tone, although of course this is a mere shadow of the performance it gives you when you tweak the volume pot and you slip into active mode. Those top and bottom end boosts are seriously powerful, giving you a ton of tone options before you even consider the Super-Quads.

But who are we kidding? You'll probably buy a Lionheart just for its amazing pickups. As you'll recall from our previous reviews, with the flick of a switch each unit changes from a split-coil configuration (plus red LED), to single coil (green) to humbucker (blue). As Stuart Clayton said in his Lionheart Standard review, after a while you start to think of each tone as red, green or blue, a curious side effect which really grows on you. Here, of course, we have two pickups, and so we can combine the three configurations any way you like, offering us 15 pickup combinations. While there are far too many options to list here, especially when you throw the active boosts into the mix, we have our favourites, including a tight, staccato sound with plenty of balls that you get when you select a red and a green tone. We mean, a split and a single...

CONCLUSION

We had no hesitation whatsoever in recommending the standard Lionheart Standard basses to you in our earlier review, and we see no reason to change that now. They're utterly wonderful instruments that you can enjoy for a lifetime. Now, would we recommend these extras-loaded English Rose variants? Absolutely, assuming certain criteria. One, you have tons of money. Two, you want loads and loads of tone options.

To be absolutely clear, let's look at the extra charges over and above the cost of the bass itself. The English Rose neck is £400. The mahogany body with forward-facing rosewood is also £400, or £600 if you want the back of the body to have the rosewood too. The gold hardware is £180. The three-band Glockenklang preamp is only £40, so you'd be nuts not to add that option. And as we've seen, the LEDs will cost you £580. Pick and choose the features you need, and bear in mind that a basic Lionheart four-string with the English Rose neck comes in at 'only' £2,050: a lot of bass for the outlay.

You'll get a great bass whatever options you choose: the only real question is how far you want to go towards the fully-loaded, ultimate instrument – like the ones we have here. It's been a pleasure to play them.

worldmags

ERNIE BALL
Music Man Reflex

2009 marked a quarter of a century of Ernie Ball Music Man. Matthew Oakley gets to grips with the latest evolution of the company's 25th Anniversary bass

Strings and Things Ltd
www.stringsandthings.co.uk

Released in 2009 in a limited-edition run, the Ernie Ball 25th Anniversary bass was designed to encapsulate the very best the Californian company has to offer, including an exotic top wood and a push-button electronics system that offers active, passive, series and parallel modes. The Reflex bass is essentially a production model of the Anniversary bass and shares all the same characteristics, minus the extravagant quilted or flamed maple top. It's also available in multiple-colour and -pickup configurations, including single humbucker, dual humbuckers, or humbucker plus two single-coils. While the StingRay remains a mainstay among bass players everywhere, how will this slightly more exclusive Music Man design measure up?

Body and Neck

At first glance the Reflex looks pretty old school. There's not a great deal of contouring in the body, though the rounded edges ensure everything

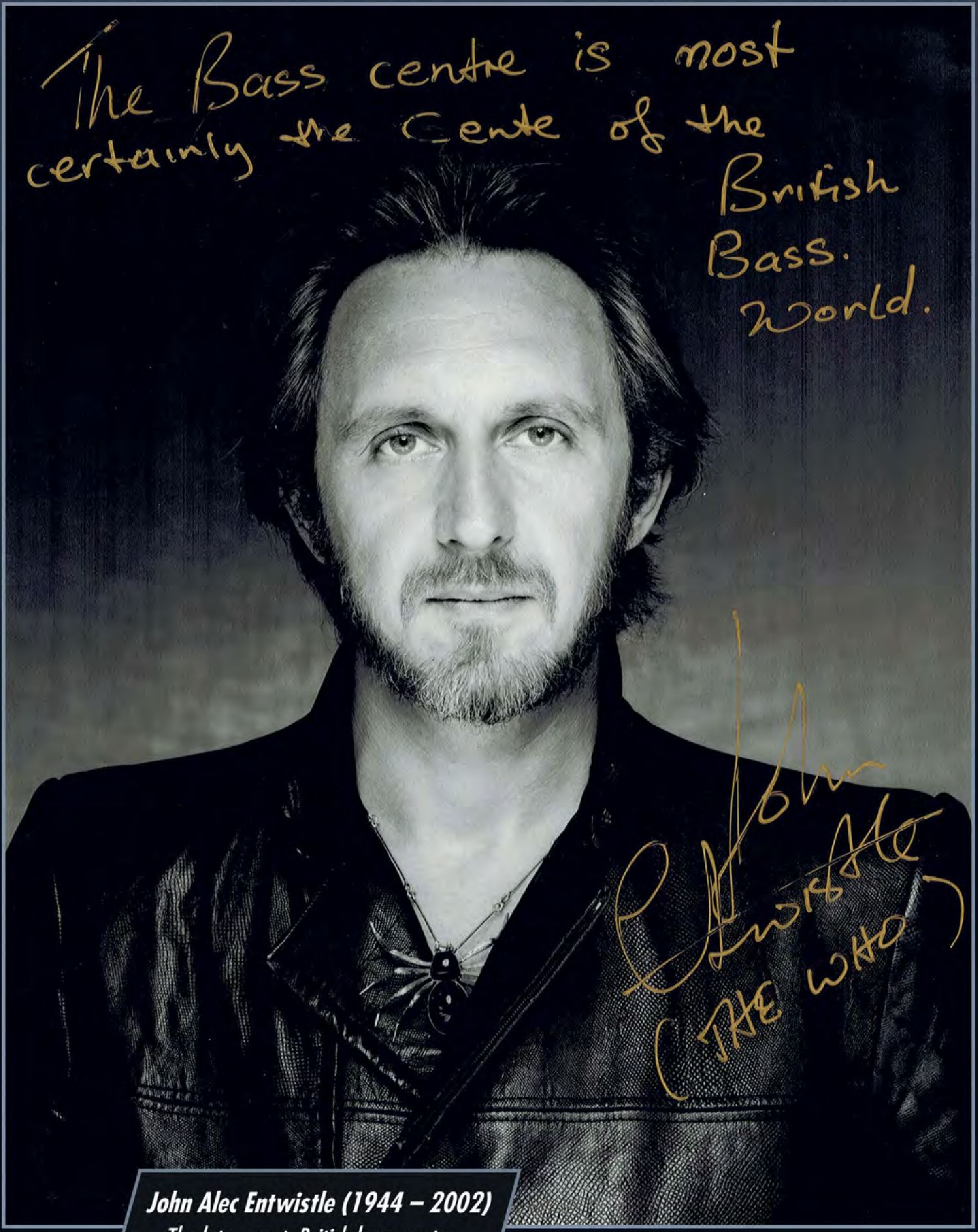
"GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE PUSH-BUTTONS CAN BE A LITTLE CONFUSING AT FIRST AS THERE'S NO INDICATION TO OUTLINE EXACTLY WHAT THEY DO"

feels comfortable enough. The black high-gloss finish looks great with some neat cream binding around its top edge, and it's fair to say that you don't really miss the exotic top woods of the Anniversary model. The ash body has a maple top with a mahogany tone block positioned underneath the pickups, which is designed to improve the bass's overall resonance and acoustic qualities. The neck join is a classic bolt-on design consisting of five bolts and a well-sculpted heel.

The neck itself is made from select maple and has been treated with gunstock oil and a hand-rubbed special wax blend that lends the surface a smooth, more natural feel. Our review model has a rosewood fingerboard, though a maple or fretless Pau Ferro board with or without inlaid fret lines is also available. While the Reflex feels a little body-heavy, and the headstock is noticeably smaller than usual with a matching black fascia, the neck is nicely balanced and very playable. This bass feels reassuringly solid and comfortable to play, with a great set-up that meant we were able to take it straight from its case to the stage.

Hardware

The Reflex features the same electronics system as the 25th Anniversary



John Alec Entwistle (1944 – 2002)
The late, great, British bass master

www.basscentre.com
all about that bass

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £ 2,150
MADE IN | USA
SCALE LENGTH | 863mm (34")
FRETS | 22 high-profile, wide
NECK | Maple, 27.9cm radius
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
BODY | Ash with maple top and mahogany tone block
PICKUPS | 2 x humbuckers with ceramic magnets
TUNERS | Custom Music Man with tapered string posts
CONTROLS | Master volume, passive tone, stacked active 4-band EQ controls, 4 two-way push-buttons for active/passive, series/parallel, neck & bridge pickup selection
BRIDGE | Music Man chrome-plated, hardened steel bridge plate with stainless steel saddles
FINISH | Black, high-gloss polyester
WEIGHT | 4.01kg (8.4lb)

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Top marks for sounds and playability
MINUS | Hefty price tag
OVERALL | An ideal bass for the professional player

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

"THE REFLEX IS SOLIDLY BUILT WITH AN IMPRESSIVE CORE DESIGN AND DISTINCTIVE STYLE THAT WILL APPEAL TO A BROAD SPECTRUM OF THE BASS-PLAYING COMMUNITY"

model, including four two-way push-buttons that serve as individual pickup selectors plus active/passive and series/parallel selectors. Alongside the passive preamp, which comprises master volume and tone controls, there's a four-band active EQ for cutting or boosting the treble, high-mid, low-mid and bass frequencies. The active circuit is housed in a shielded cavity on the rear side of the body and powered by two 9-volt batteries.

In use, getting to grips with the push-buttons can be a little confusing at first as there's no indication to outline exactly what they do. Thankfully, the bass arrived with a Dymo tape label outlining the various functions, which you can easily peel off once they've sunk in. The Super Slinky Bass strings are secured by a bulky Music Man bridge and custom Music Man machine heads with tapered string posts.

Sounds

The Reflex bass has a bright and clear tone with heaps of low end. As you might expect, the humbucking pickups sound quite punchy, but the real weight lies in the bass's lower range. Thanks to the excellent set-up and solid build, the neck is really workable. The strings have plenty of give, so you can attack notes, bending strings and digging in right across the 22 chunky frets. You can comfortably switch from slap to unison lead lines and low-end rumbles.

Using the active EQ you can add more muscle to a range of bass tones, though we were quite happy to plug in with the EQ set flat for the most part. When it comes to the push-button system, we were more than a little sceptical to begin with, but despite its unfamiliarity, the system works quite well. Coupled with the EQ you can merge active, passive, series and parallel modes to give endless sonic combinations. Each pickup can be selected independently, but the blend is less subtle compared to that achieved with a rotary blend control. You get a big boost in volume when you switch in the active preamp, so be wary if you engage it mid gig. In parallel mode the bass has a rounder, more retro tone, but in series mode it really comes to life. The tone is brighter and punchier with stacks of power throughout.

Conclusion

As we have come to expect from Music Man, the Reflex is solidly built with an impressive core design and distinctive style that will appeal to a broad spectrum of the bass-playing community. The twin humbuckers coupled with the active EQ and push-button switching deliver a varied range of well-defined bass tones that serve as an excellent platform for all kinds of playing styles. The passive sound is great too, and preferable if you favour a more traditional bass tone. It's not exactly cheap, and the hefty price tag will keep the Reflex beyond some players' reach, but as with many Music Man basses, as a pro instrument we suspect it will remain a first-call choice.

worldmags

FENDER
60th Anniversary Precision Bass

It was way back in 1951 that Fender first put their Precision Bass into production, and 2011 saw the 60th anniversary, not just of that instrument, but pretty much the concept of the electric bass itself, Andrew McKinney writes

Fender
www.fender.com

It's an amazing testament to Leo Fender's ideas and design that 64 years since its introduction, and despite all the world's advancements, the P-Bass is still one of the best-selling and most used instruments in music today. There were some attempts at an electrified double bass before the Precision, but nothing as successful or ubiquitous as the beloved P-Bass.

If you've never played or owned a P-Bass – you simply have to. You can't ignore such a significant legacy of live and recorded music that uses 'that' sound, and when you first plug in and play, it will sound incredibly familiar and somehow very 'right' – especially when played in a band. Admittedly, the sound of a solo P-Bass can seem a bit harsh and unrefined, almost 'plonky', but electric bass was never originally designed as a solo instrument. It's the way that sound sits in the mix that makes it so perfect – a strong low end that places you just in the right register, and with enough bite from the mids and treble to cut through and put some front on the note for clarity and bite.

There are currently around seven versions of the regular Precision Bass available, plus five reissues and seven artist models. You can get ones with extra pickups, five strings, active electronics and all sorts, so exactly what features was its diamond anniversary celebrated with?

Body and Neck

The first thing you'll notice that's different about the 60th Anniversary model is the scratchplate design, which comes straight from the 1951 version, as does the shape of the control plate under the volume and tone knobs. It's great that this Anniversary model has such an obvious and direct link to the bass that was first sold 60-something years ago. That bass, however, had a straight 'slab' body with no contouring, as this wasn't introduced until 1954. Having a more rounded and ergonomic body shape to a bass makes a lot of sense – it helps keep the weight down and it feels more comfortable to rest your arm on or balance on your leg, so this is definitely an upgrade worth having.

The colour of the original 1951 model was butterscotch blonde, whereas this version has a regular blonde finish in what Fender are referring to as a 'thin-skin' lacquer. Sometime around 1969 Fender started using a thicker and more durable polyester finish which, according to most, detracted from the overall resonance and tone of the instruments. The disadvantage with the thinner lacquers was that they marked more easily, but these days we don't mind a few war wounds on our instruments, and the improvement in tone is worth it. The light finish looks great and suitably vintage, and you can clearly see the wide grain of the ash wood that it is made from, faithful to the original version.

Another very obvious difference between this and the 1951 original is the pickup. The early 50s P-Bass also had a single straight pickup with four magnetic pole pieces – one per string. In 1957 this was changed to the current 'split' design to improve hum cancelling and also to make two pole pieces per string so that any magnetic pull was decentralised. Generally it was thought that this led to an improvement in tone, and the modification has survived on virtually every version of the P-Bass ever since. This Anniversary model

features a vintage-style pickup, the same as is currently featured on their American Vintage '62 Reissue. The slightly unusual thing here is that the '51 scratchplate shape has a flat space on it to sit flush with the straight pickup, but as it's combined here with a split pickup, it doesn't line up and there is a gap. Fender have made this into a feature, and whether you like it or not is a matter of personal choice. (This pickup/scratchplate combination is already available on the Mike Dirnt artist model, so you may have decided already.)

The final obvious visual difference between this and the 1951 bass is the headstock. In 1957 Fender did a design overhaul of the P-Bass that included changing the pickup to the split version, making the scratchplate larger, and also changing the headstock to a fuller, more rounded shape as opposed to the original slim 'Telecaster' version.

So essentially what we have here is a 1957 version of the bass, but with the scratchplate and control plate from 1951, in a colour that, although not exactly the same, harks back nicely to the fledgling years of the instrument. Fender already do a '57 reissue as part of the American Vintage series, but when

Bass Direct

The UK largest selection of New and used

Basses, amps and accessories

Lightweight amplification specialist

Since 2007

It's all about the bass....

worldmags

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £1,534
MADE IN | USA
SCALE LENGTH | 863mm (34")
FRETS | 20
NUT | Synthetic bone
FINGERBOARD | Maple
BODY | Ash
PICKUPS | Vintage-style split single-coil
TUNERS | Fender/Hipshot vintage keys with tapered shafts
CONTROLS | 1 x volume, 1 x tone
BRIDGE | High-mass vintage (thru-body or top load)

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A 'best-of-the-best' in terms of retro features
MINUS | Not that different from the American Standard
OVERALL | Excellent design and build quality

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

you go beyond the initial look of the Anniversary bass, there are a few more differences that set it apart. Picking the bass up and playing it would alert you to the fact that the fretboard is flatter than the reissues (a bigger radius). The fretboard on both the '57 and '62 reissues has a radius of 18.41cm (7.25"), whereas this model is 24.1cm (9.5"). Having a more curved fretboard can make it tricky to maintain a consistent volume output from all the strings, as the pickup itself would need to mirror this curvature to have each string the same distance from its pole pieces. This isn't impossible to set up on a split pickup, but having less of a curve to the fretboard makes this more easily achievable. A flatter fretboard can also be easier to get around playing-wise, as it feels more consistent when changing strings or jumping octaves.

Hardware

Two other design features where the 60th Anniversary model differs from the reissues are the bridge and the truss rod adjustment. Up until 1970 the bridge saddles on Fender basses were threaded all the way across, enabling you to adjust the string spacing according to your personal preference. The problem is that there is no visual reference as to where the string was resting before, so every time you change strings you either need to remeasure the spacing or just guess. This style of bridge is prone to lateral movement anyway, so all this hardly makes it a precision affair. The Anniversary model has the best of both worlds as there are four slots in the top of each bridge saddle. The bridge saddle screws sit in a groove that makes lateral movement impossible. Plus the bridge gives you the option of 'thru-body' stringing or normal 'top loading'.

Adjusting the truss rod on a vintage or reissue bass can be a nightmare, as originally it simply had a cross head at one end that is part buried behind the scratchplate and body of the bass. To make an adjustment you actually need to remove or loosen the neck so that you can fully expose the end of this nut. Not removing the neck and taking a short cut here can result in some serious gouges on the bodywork, something we have seen on all too many basses. Sensibly, the Anniversary model has a standard Allen key bolt – not only that but the correct tool is included with the instrument, along with Allen keys for adjusting the rest of the bridge settings. Full marks here, Fender.

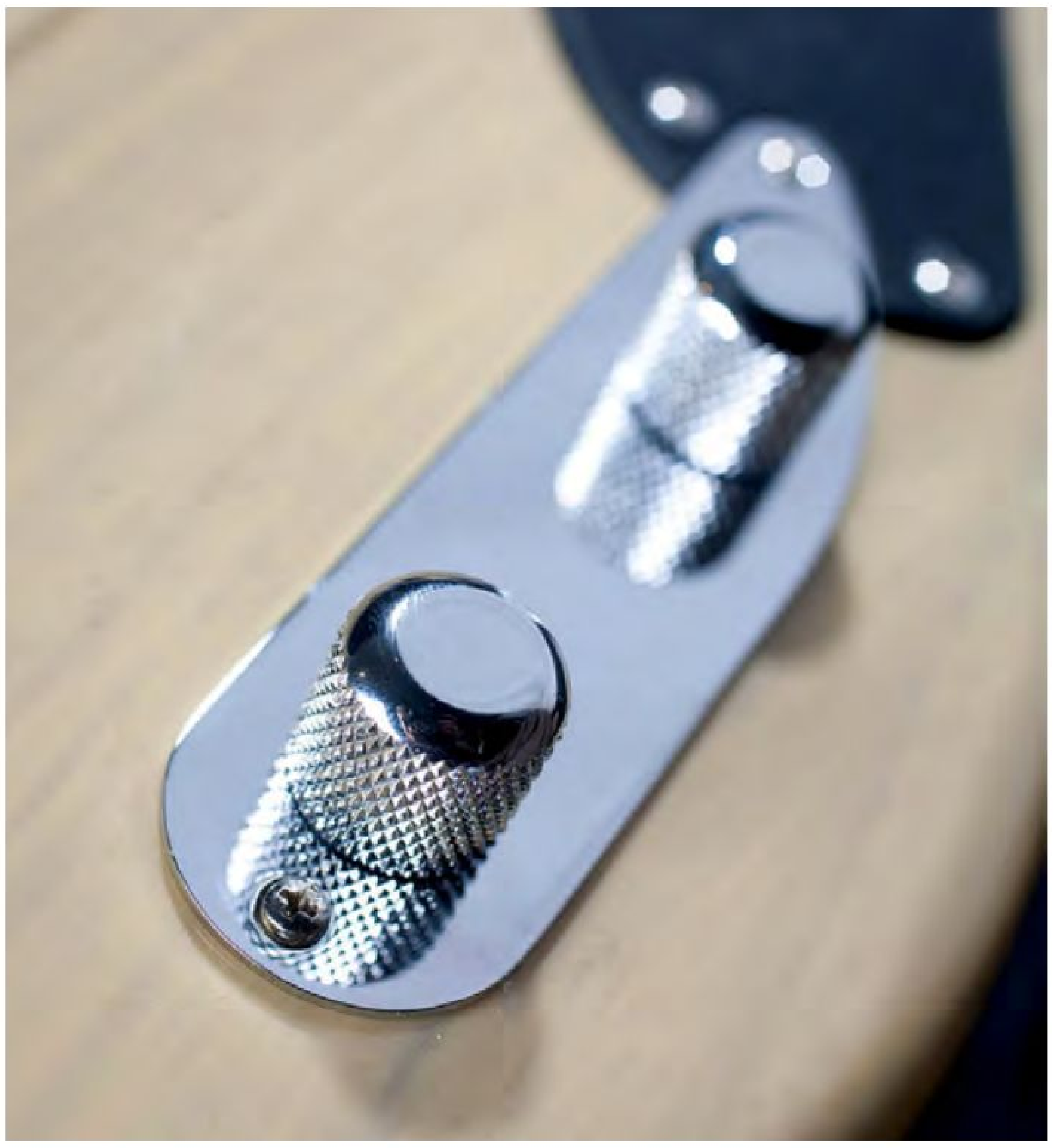
The final specifications worthy of note are that the neck is stiffened with graphite rods, the tuners are Fender's current Hipshot lightweight models, and there is also a really cool little string retainer built into the A-string tuner. This is a simple hook that the string sits under that pulls the string down, maintaining a decent break angle across the nut, improving sustain and preventing any danger of rattling. It's a simple yet effective solution to a perennial issue that has plagued Fender basses, and indeed any bass with a four-in-a-row headstock design.

Sounds

If you've played a P-Bass with a maple fretboard before, you know what you're getting here. Strung with roundwound strings you get an upfront sound, quite aggressive in nature and with plenty of mid-range poke. This isn't the smoothest or most refined of sounds, but it sits so well in the mix with a band that you'll always cut through, but still with sufficient support in the low end. If you're a pick player this sound will suit you down to the ground as there's power and grind available in bucketloads.

The key to taming this beast is tone control. It's only one knob, but it's all you need. Backing it off slightly tames the top-end 'clank' and puts you in a subtler zone, along the lines of the '62 reissues. A little more and we're starting to get a smoother sound, and when you get to fully off you're in the 'under a duvet' zone, so more scope from a simple passive tone control could not be had. If Duck Dunn's more your thing, then it's flatwounds that you'll need, giving you a much smoother and more retro sound.

Under the fingers this feels like a sturdy beast, and the quality of finishing and set-up is top-notch. One thing that you may notice if you're used to playing P-Basses is that the pickup on this one is more exposed and therefore there's more area to rest your thumb on. Normally the pickup would be surrounded by the scratchplate and less exposed, but we actually quite like this arrangement. The balance of the bass is excellent; the body weight is just right – not too heavy and not too flimsy-feeling – and with the lightweight tuners there are no neck dive issues whatsoever. Even on your lap it stays pretty much horizontal without holding it – much better than a vintage Fender.



We made some comparison recordings with other P-Basses, including reissues and originals, and tried various combinations, using direct recordings, amp simulators and compressors, and our overall conclusion is that the older basses sound smoother and have more bottom end, whereas the new Anniversary model has a brighter sound with more attack. These differences, though, are very subtle, and so much of the sound has to do with strings and set-up. Like most things, we fully expect that with the passing of a few decades this bass will mellow and improve with age, developing more of the sonic characteristics of the vintage instruments, but for a new instrument we were impressed at how extremely close it is already.

Conclusion

With such a history to draw upon, there are many directions Fender could have taken with this bass. In our opinion they have struck a great balance here between reissuing period-correct detail and including sensible improvements and upgrades that are undeniably better and make it easier to use. This bass respects the heritage of the instrument, yet includes some great features that do nothing to detract from the tone or ethos of the bass, only enhance it. We were also hugely impressed with the finish quality of the instrument, plus the fact that you get all the tools you need, a strap, lead, set-up guide and the current SKB/Fender case, which is without doubt the best lightweight flight case we have come across.

It is worth stating at this point that many of the features we have described on this bass are also part of the current American Standard Precision Bass – the adjustable bridge, truss rod access, neck rods, tuners and string retainer, the only noticeable differences being the scratchplate and control plate from the 1951 design, the vintage-style pickup, and the commemorative 60th-Anniversary design on the neckplate. If it's the style of the pickup/scratchplate that catches your eye, and your budget is tighter, then there is the Mike Dirnt signature model, although this has only part of the body contouring and doesn't have some of the other hardware features, and also isn't US made.

For vintage enthusiasts wanting the period-correct detail on a new instrument, we'd recommend the American Vintage reissues. Bear in mind, though, that these are a fair bit more expensive, and that some of the later changes in design were made for good reason! What the 60th Anniversary P-Bass offers is a 'best-of' in terms of reissues, and for just a little bit extra, compared to the American Standard, you get a limited-edition bass that's distinctive, commemorative, and a great addition to the Precision Bass heritage.

worldmags

FODERA
Amboyna Burl Monarch 4 Elite

Repeating the mantra "don't drop it, don't drop it", Duff Battye gets to grips with an exquisite – and eye-wateringly pricey – custom Fodera

Bass Gear
www.bassgear.co.uk

This review will contain a lot of facts, but one will overshadow all the rest. It's the ultimate elephant in the room – the number you're thinking about right now: £11,000. That's for a bass guitar, mind, not a family car. The Amboyna Burl Monarch Elite is by some way the most expensive bass we've ever reviewed in this magazine's history, and in these financially straitened times, can a five-figure price tag be justified?

You know the history. Fodera have been making amazing guitars since 1983. Set up by the luthier Vinny Fodera and pro player Joey Lauricella, the Brooklyn-based company aims to deliver hand-built instruments with the ability to deliver "tonal nuances unavailable from any other instrument on the market". They have a more affordable Standard range made in small batches without additional customisation, artist Signature basses and full custom models with a whole range of options and personalised touches. The instrument on test here is a Monarch 4 Elite through-neck design, made specifically for the NAMM show and then brought into the UK as a display model by our esteemed colleagues at Bass Gear of Twyford. So what's it like?

Build Quality

At first glance the Monarch shape looks classical. There's no obtrusive headstock or weird and wonderful body shape. The look is simple and, up close, it's a lovely looking instrument. You would expect a handcrafted bass guitar to have a great build quality but, as you'd also expect, this instrument takes that finesse to an entirely new level. The body is, in the main, ash, with an alder tone block for warmth and fronted by the distinctive amboyna burl topwood. It's a distinctive look – and not to everyone's tastes, I would imagine. The neck is five-piece maple with bubinga stringers and flame maple core and a rosewood fretboard: simple mother-of-pearl fret markers with tulips identify the 12th and 24th frets.

The headstock is distinctly Fodera, with a steep break angle and the trademark butterfly crafted from handpicked abalone. Fodera makes the pickups in conjunction with Seymour Duncan. Crucially, because this is what you're paying big bucks for, both the front and back pickup are housed in the wood taken from the body, mimicking the same layers and pin-striping: these take three entire days to craft and cost $550 on their own.

> "I'VE PLAYED EXPENSIVE BASSES BEFORE, AND THEY ALWAYS MAKE ME SOUND WAY ABOVE MY ABILITY LEVEL"

Skjold Design Guitars
www.skjolddesign.com

Drakkar 6

Estate Series
Catacomb chambering (tm)
Birdseye Maple Top & Back
Obeche Core
Indian Rosewood fingerboard
Indian Rosewood Control Knobs
Custom Skjold Ramp System in Birdseye Maple
Custom Skjold Dual Coil Pickups
Luminlay fretlines and Dots
Custom Skjold/Hipshot Hardware
Custom John East Uni-Pre Deluxe Preamp

worldmags

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £11,000 approx
MADE IN | USA
BODY | Ash, alder tone block, amboyna burl topwood
NECK | Five-piece maple neck with bubinga stringers and flame maple core, 34" scale
NECK JOINT | Thru-neck
NUT | Width 19mm
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
FRETS | 24
PICKUPS | 2 x Fodera/Duncan dual-coil
ELECTRONICS | Active Fodera/Pope custom three-band pre-amp
CONTROLS | Coil tap, dual/single switch, active/passive switch, mid frequency switch, pan control, volume plus tone integrated control, treble, mid and bass controls
HARDWARE | Fodera bridge and machine heads
WEIGHT | 4.15kg
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED | Fodera hardcase
LEFT-HAND OPTION AVAILABLE | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Faultless sound and playability and great looks
MINUS | The cost, the cost and oh yes – the cost
OVERALL | The closest to perfection that you are ever likely to find in a bass guitar, depending on your personal preferences. Now, where's that spare £11,000?

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■■
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■■
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□

> "IF YOU HAVE THAT MUCH MONEY TO SPEND ON A BASS, PERHAPS THAT SUM DOESN'T MEAN TO YOU WHAT IT MEANS TO MOST PEOPLE"

Sounds and Playability

If the build quality is strong, the playability of this bass is where you really discover what a remarkable instrument it is. I've played expensive basses before, and they always make me sound way above my ability level. The Monarch has the same effect: running up and down the fretboard, I appear to have acquired a far superior bassist's hands and fingers. There is no issue with action: it almost feels as if the bass isn't there. You'll also notice that there is no apparent drop-off in output, whichever fret you are holding down. Remarkably, the open E has the same clarity and boom as the 12th fret of the D string or the 24th fret of the G string.

Tonally the bass comes into its own, with a huge range of options – and here is definitely where a large chunk of your £11,000 is being spent. The Monarch is equipped with a self-explanatory active and passive switch, a switch which changes between dual and single coil in the pickups and a fairly subtle mid frequency switch. The real pleasure comes in the active treble, mid and bass controls. Each move of each switch has a discernible effect on the sound, and the permutations of the whole set-up are vast. A quick Billy Sheehan impression yields a powerful tap tone. Dial through the options and you'll easily access scooped tones that would work in a metal band. Reggae and soul options are there at the tweak of a dial. Take all the treble out and play full bass on the front pickup with an open E and there isn't a hint of fuzz: just a lovely all embracing warmth.

The volume sits on top of a dual dial that has a passive tone treble roll-off beneath it. A nice touch is that the tone works in active as well as passive mode. Much like the active controls, the pan dial also does exactly what it's meant to. Each dial also has a noticeable detente at the midpoint, making them easy to navigate.

So far, so standard for any bass worth more than a grand. So why pay 11 times more? Simply this: every other bass I have played involves compromise – on sound, tonal variety, playability, and controls. This bass doesn't appear to know what compromise is. It is an instrument that you just don't want to put down. Everything else – practice, rehearsal, tweaking sounds – comes after this.

I sat with this bass for two hours. It was effortless to play. I had to drag myself away from Bass Gear to get on with my day.

Conclusion

It's difficult to think of an instrument as close to perfection when it also comes along with a price tag of £11,000. But if you have that much money to spend on a bass, perhaps that sum doesn't mean to you what it means to most people. Whether it be cars or motorbikes or bicycles or guitars, if you pay at the top of the relevant price band you should get something special.

If you accept that you could spend a quarter of this price tag on a very good bass, and that the more you spend over that amount the smaller the incremental payoff will be in terms of improvement, you'll appreciate that what you have here is close to the very best.

Personally, I fell in love with this instrument, and if I had £11,000 to spend, I would buy it in an instant.

worldmags

GIBSON

Krist Novoselic Signature RD Bass

Will the signature four-string from Nirvana's former bassist be 'heavenly' or will we be left with 'All Apologies'? Review by Jack Stevens

Gibson
www.gibson.com

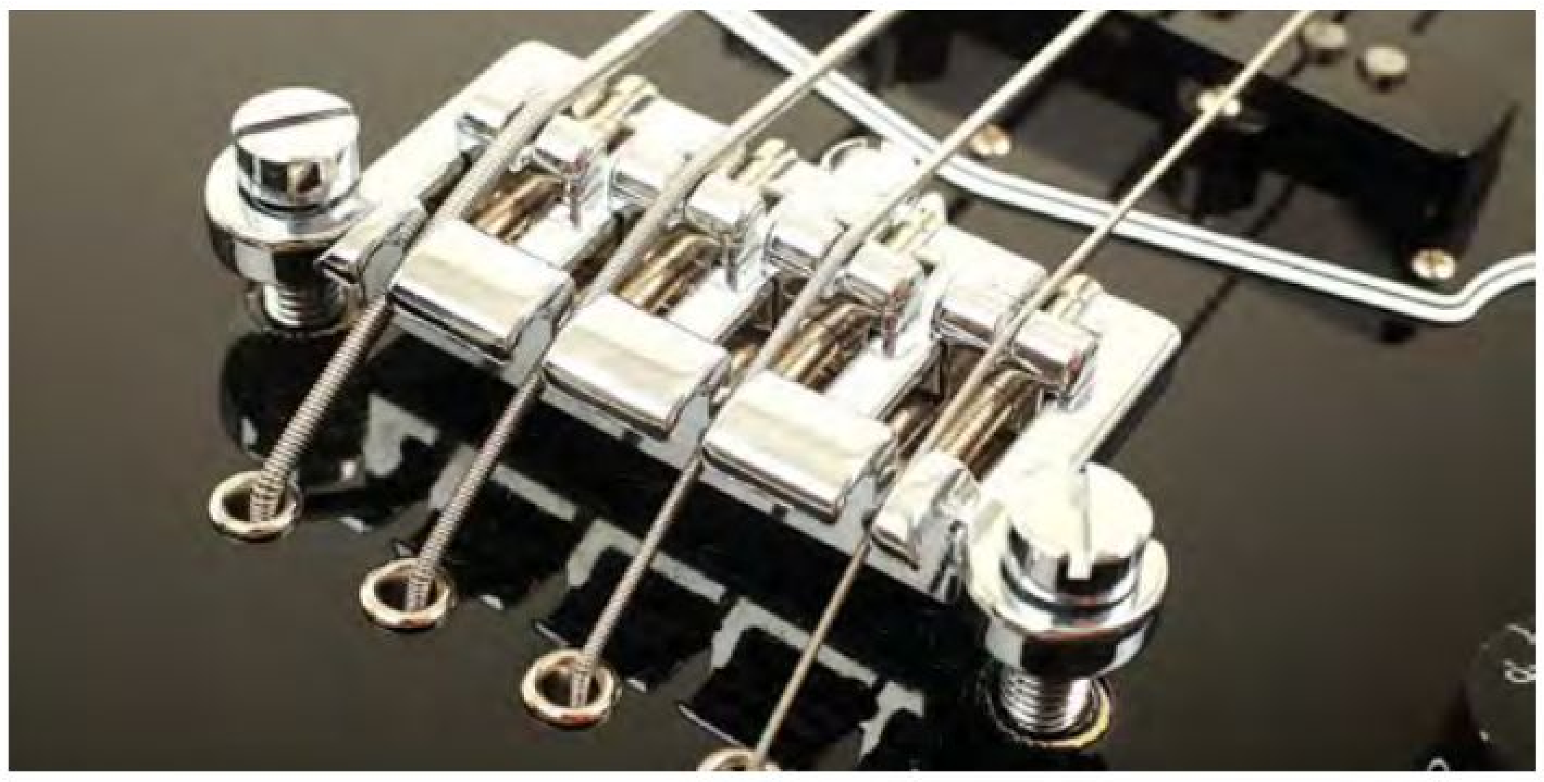
With 2011 being the 20-year anniversary of DGC Records releasing American grunge icons Nirvana's *Nevermind* album, it seemed more than appropriate that *BGM* take a look at Gibson's Krist Novoselic signature four-string. Novoselic has had a strong association throughout his career with Gibson basses, in particular with the Ripper, Gibson RD Artist and Thunderbird IV models.

Build Quality

The Novoselic Signature RD bass is every bit the great instrument you'd expect from the folks that gave us the Les Paul guitar. It was a very welcome surprise to open the hardcase to such a curvy and quirky-looking bass, paying homage to the RD bass of the late 70s, but with a set of modern electronics. Shapely aesthetics aside, the glossy ebony black finish (nitrocellulose lacquer) of this instrument gives it a real 'rock' look and the glued-in neck design adds to the 'solid' image of this bass. Despite having some rather interesting contours, everything looks and feels very satisfying. This bass wouldn't look out of place in a Steinway & Sons showroom!

Both neck and body are cut from solid maple wood, so consequently this bass is no feather, weighing in at approximately 12 pounds. There's an obeche fingerboard that feels almost unfinished against the neck lacquer, which could get sweaty under the thumb. The featured hardware also lends itself to the obvious sturdiness of this instrument by being of an equally rugged quality; we've got a satisfying tough Grover 'shamrock-key' tuning system in place, and the Gibson three-point bridge looks super-cool, especially with the bass strings feeding through the body.

> "TONALLY, THE NOVOSELIC RD DELIVERS A WARM AND ROUND SOUND WITH A SLIGHT BRIGHTNESS... DUE TO THE SEYMOUR DUNCAN HOT STACK PICKUPS"



The curvaceous body of this RD sports a black five-ply pickguard with an equally cheeky shape, just like the original Artist and Standard versions. The classic Black Speed knobs, which act as the volume and tone controls, look great on here. We've always felt that they had an air of old-school hi-fi about them, and it's nice to see that they've not been upgraded with something more contemporary. Gibson have used a

"AN INNOVATIVE COMBINATION OF TONE, FEEL, AND DURABILITY UNLIKE ANY OTHER STRING I'VE PLAYED.
A GAME CHANGER FOR BASS PLAYERS."
PINO PALLADINO
PLAYS SUPER SLINKY FLATWOUND BASS STRINGS
ERNIE BALL SLINKY
FLATWOUND
ELECTRIC BASS STRINGS
45 65 80 100
ernieball.com | ernieball.co.uk | #iplayslinky
ERNIE BALL®
Crafted in Southern California, USA

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £1,099
MADE IN | USA
BODY | Maple
NEC | Maple
FINGERBOARD | Dark Obeche
INLAYS | Acrylic dot
SCALE | 34"
FRETS | 20
TUNERS | Grover shamrock-key tuners
BRIDGE | String-thru, 3-point, adjustable saddles
PICKUPS | Seymour Duncan Basslines Hot
STACK | STK-J2N and J2B
CONTROLS | Black Speed knobs: 2 x volume, 1 x tone
HARDWARE | Chrome and aluminium
WEIGHT | 12lbs
CASE/GIG BAG | Gibson RD Hardshell
LEFT-HAND AVAILABLE | No

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Healthy alternative-rock tone packed into a beast of an instrument
MINUS | Unsurprisingly, a weighty bit of kit. You may tire of having to carry a hardcase everywhere
OVERALL | An exciting addition to the Gibson family, with more character than your standard rock bass

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□

Corian nut in this design and it sits at the foot of the noticeably dipped-back headstock, which aids with string resonance.

Sounds and Playability

So does this bass turn you into a Krist Novoselic clone? Well, no. And without an Ampeg SVT rig to hand, and of course his enviable feel, it's not really surprising. Tonally, the Novoselic RD delivers a warm and round sound with a slight brightness which, in this instance, is also due to the bass being straight from the factory, as well as to the on-board Seymour Duncan Basslines Hot Stack pickups. Ideally, we'd have held on to this for a couple of months to get a true insight into its potential, i.e. after the strings have gone dead and the sweat and grit have started to take effect.

To get into the right frame of mind for our road test, we adjusted our bass strap to its maximum length and plugged in. Having initially explored the RD in a seated position, there was the expectation that playing the Novoselic bass while standing upright was going to be an endurance test. Amazingly, the overall balance between neck and body

"What a frickin' awesome pedal!"

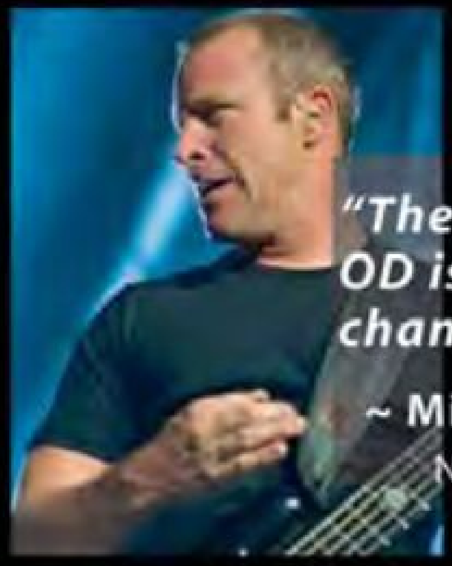
~ Mark King
Level 42

"The Bassbone OD is absolutely brilliant!"

~ Dennis Crouch
Diana Krall,
T-Bone Burnett

"The Bassbone OD is my new choice."

~ Victor Wooten
The Flecktones



"The Bassbone OD is a game changer."

~ Mike Kroeger
Nickelback

"AMAZING!!! BRAVO!!! No more compromising!"

~ Danny Miranda
Queen, Paul Rogers

"Are you kidding me? I'm loving this thing!!!"

~ Ric Fierabracci
Chick Corea, Sir Tom Jones

"everything that I need...with a cool headphone amp built in, no less."

~ Justin Meldal-Johnsen
NIN, Beck, Tori Amos

"Amazingly useful and well-designed."

~ Benny Reitveld
Santana, Miles Davis

"The Bassbone® OD is a game changer."

~ Mike Kroeger
Nickelback

Introducing the exciting new Bassbone OD – everything you need in a bass preamp ...and more!

The Bassbone OD is a bass preamp like none other. It features two input channels, each equipped with level control, super powerful EQ and low frequency filters to squash resonance. Channel-A has a PZB booster to increase sensitivity and load to 10 meg ohms, optimizing it for use with piezo pickups. Channel-B takes a different slant with Drag™ control load correction to optimize tone and feel when using passive instruments like a vintage Fender bass. Toggle between the two channels with the footswitch, or blend them together with on-board mixing. And that's just the start – check out all of the Bassbone OD's game-changing features at: **www.mybassbone.com**

*Specifications and appearance subject to change without notice.

Radial® engineering

...power tools for power players℠

www.radialeng.com
1588 Kebet Way, Port Coquitlam BC V3C 5M5 tel: 604-942-1001

Authorized Distributors:

Austria: 4AUDIO 4audio.at	**Belgium:** FACE-BE face-be.eu	**Czech Republic:** MUSIC DATA musicdata.cz	**Denmark:** ALFA AUDIO alfaaudio.dk	**Finland:** MSONIC msonic.fi	**France:** ARBITER arbiterfrance.com	**Germany:** SHURE DISTRIBUTION shuredistribution.de	**Hungary:** GEM KFT gemkft.hu	**Italy:** GRISBY MUSIC grisby.it
Netherlands: TM AUDIO tmaudio.nl	**Norway:** DRAMMEN drammenlyd.no	**Poland:** LAUDA AUDIO lauda-audio.pl	**Russia:** SLAMI slami.ru	**Spain:** SEESOUND seesound.es	**Sweden:** ARVA TRADING arva.se	**Switzerland:** MGM AUDIO mgmaudio.ch	**U.A.E.:** MELODY HOUSE melodyhouse.ae	**United Kingdom:** SHURE DISTRIBUTION UK shuredistribution.co.uk

worldmags

"THIS IS BY NO MEANS EXCLUSIVELY A 'NIRVANA BASS' AS THE RDS ARE WELL KNOWN IN THEIR OWN RIGHT"

is extremely even and it felt as if the Gibson was just floating. Perhaps after two hours of rocking out, players will require some respite from the gravitational pull delivered by this instrument, but it's still more than a bit impressive.

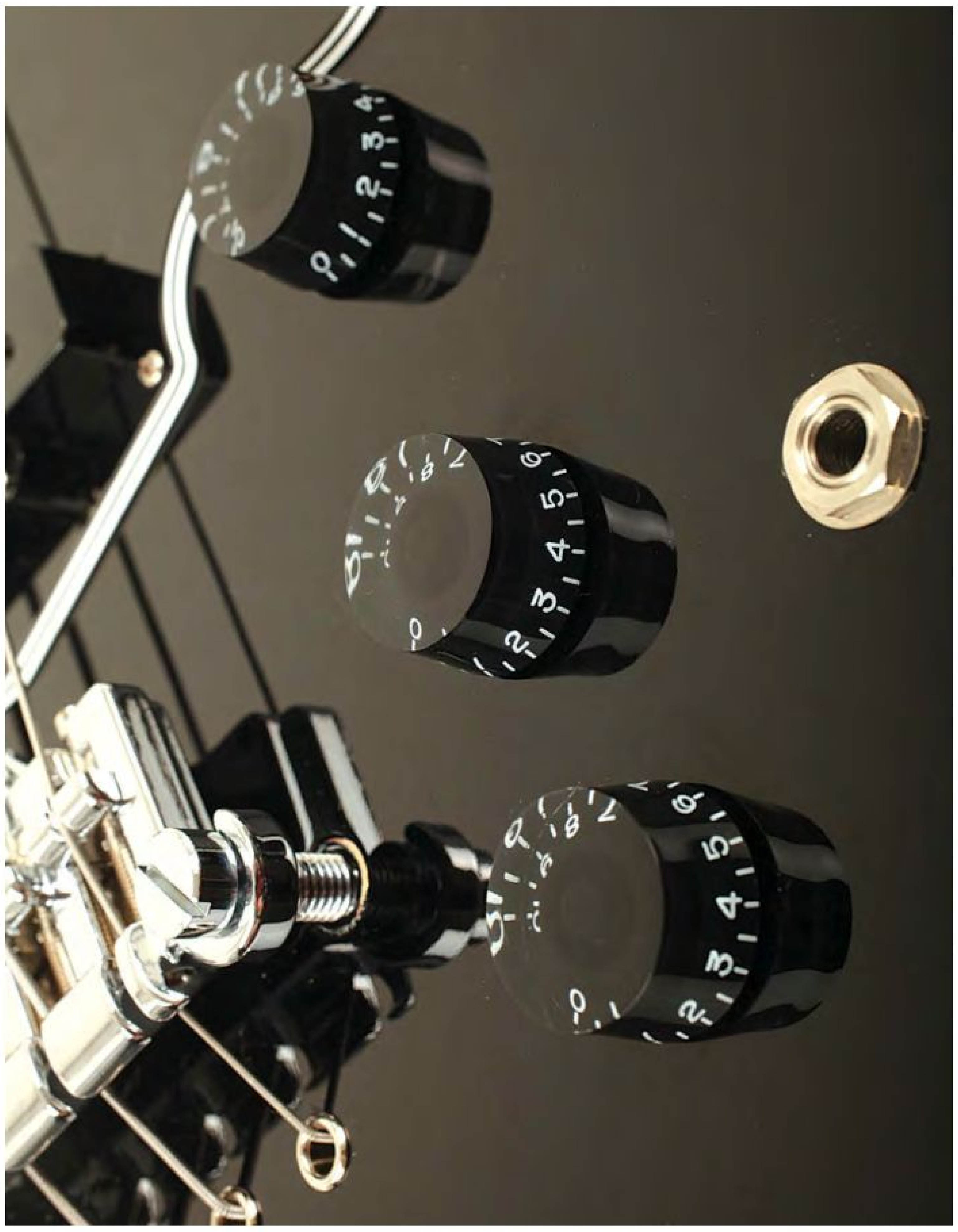
Fingerstyle bass on this axe is loads of fun, what with having the lacquered neck and obeche fingerboard combination, although as soon as you apply a plectrum to the strings, the sound is even more magical. You can just about access the 20th fret of this bass via its single cutaway. Worth noting is that the tone control doesn't really colour the sound of the bass as drastically as with some other basses. With basses geared towards a more 'traditional' style of playing, it's often extremely useful to be able to obtain a muffled tone through cutting some of the highs, but that's one thing lacking on this Gibson. For such an exciting passive bass, we're more than happy to overlook this.

To get a 'Smells Like Teen Spirit'-esque bass sound, we found that the combination of bridge pickup and tone control on full, with the neck control off, worked the best.

Conclusion

Being Novoselic's signature model, the RD will no doubt appeal to a whole host of players who choose it either out of a love for Krist's playing with the various projects that he's been involved with over the years, or for the sound of a particular Nirvana track or album. This is by no means exclusively a 'Nirvana bass' as the RDs are well known in their own right, but what Gibson have achieved in producing this particular model is a slightly tweaked top-class rock bass. Obviously, because of its design, you'll no doubt cause a few heads to turn by owning one of these, and if loud guitars and big beards are your thing, this could be the perfect accessory.

The bass comes complete with one of Gibson's fine, if not a tad weighty, hardcases, which are moulded internally to protect the RD models specifically. If you are willing to part with £1,000, then make sure you try one of these.



IBANEZ
Grooveline G104

The new Ibanez Grooveline has been designed to make your playing experience a more comfortable one. Mike Brooks weighs up the pros and cons

Headstock Distribution
www.headstockdistribution.com • www.ibanez.com

The Grooveline range consists of two models, the G104 we have here and the G105 five-string, both of which are available in natural and deep espresso finishes (the five-string is also offered in a transparent orange). With a few tweaks to the traditional bass design and a smattering of ergonomic styling, Ibanez has come up with an innovative and potentially groundbreaking design that has been turning heads ever since its launch at the Winter NAMM show way back in January 2011. Traditionalists may find their interest in the Grooveline stunted at the first hurdle, but we're ready to investigate further to see if the visuals really do enhance the instrument's playability.

"THE BODY CURVES ARE VERY ACCOMODATING AND THE SLIM-NECK DIMENSIONS MAKE THE WHOLE PACKAGE THOROUGHLY PLAYABLE"

Body and Neck

The ergonomic body styling and general design ethos have resulted in a quirky-looking bass, no doubt about it. The smooth body lines, rounded top and bottom horns and sizable headstock have a natural flow to them that's further accentuated by some subtle contouring, both front and back, to the five-piece laminate body. Heavily grained ash facings on the top and rear adorn the alder body core, with dark wood laminates separating the different sections. The deep espresso finish is very much in keeping with the instrument's dark, rich hues of the rosewood, wenge and bubinga timbers used for the exceptionally slim neck and fingerboard.

Placed on a strap, the bass as a whole balances extremely well. The neck arches up perfectly into a natural playing position, and the rear body

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £2,076
MADE IN | Japan
COLOUR | Deep espresso
BODY | Ash/alder/ash, five-piece
NECK: Wenge/bubinga, five-piece
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
PICKUPS | 2 x CAP 'Sonic Arch' Jazz-style single-sized humbucker
ELECTRONICS | Ibanez E4 active 3-band EQ
CONTROLS | Volume, pickup pan, bass, middle, treble, EQ bypass switch
NUT WIDTH | 38 mm
NECK JOIN | Bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH | 863 mm (34")
FRETS | 24
WEIGHT | 4 kg (8.8 lb)

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Well balanced and a joy to play. A fine instrument in every respect
MINUS | The financially conscious bassist may be looking for more bells and whistles for their cash
OVERALL | Some good ideas at the design stage have resulted in a highly playable instrument with an equally pleasing array of tonal options

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■□□□

contouring allows the bass to rest comfortably against your midriff. The top body bout is relatively slim, so there isn't the usual wide chunk of wood for your arm to pass over, while the bevelled edge and contour line of the top horn remove any excess bulk from that part of the body. The minimal shaping and dropaway of the lower horn works fantastically well as a leg rest when not wearing the bass on a strap and also supports the bass in a very playable position.

The neck profile is quite Jazz-like, shallow and thin with a 38 mm width at the nut, while the string spacing is 19 mm at the bridge, so though the strings can feel a little close together at the nut end, as the neck progresses the spacing becomes fairly standard. The five-piece wenge and bubinga laminates have no gloss or satin finishing to speak of, lending the neck a very natural feel, similar to the Warwick necks of yesteryear. The shapely headstock is finished in a black gloss that shows off the pearl Ibanez moniker perfectly. The darkly coloured rosewood fingerboard could be mistaken for ebony, and with no front markers on the board, white side position markers are your only reference points. The neck has been well finished and the fret dressing is top-notch with no sharp ends anywhere

Music To Your Ears

NEW *Elixir*® Bass Strings - inspired by 4,000+ Bass Players

Improved Performance - Enhanced Playing Experience

- A more durable NANOWEB® coating,* exclusively for bass, that endures even hard-hitting attacks
- Optimised tension profiles, flexibility and feel

Extended and Refined Range

- Full line of coated round wound bass strings in a range of gauges, wrap metals and scale lengths
- NEW 4-String and 5-String sets in Stainless Steel and Nickel Plated Steel
- A wide selection of single strings to customise your own set

Great Tone - Long Life

Elixir Strings is still the only brand to coat the entire string - protecting not only the outer string surface, but also the gaps between the windings. As a result, *Elixir* Strings retain their tone longer than any other bass string, uncoated or coated.**

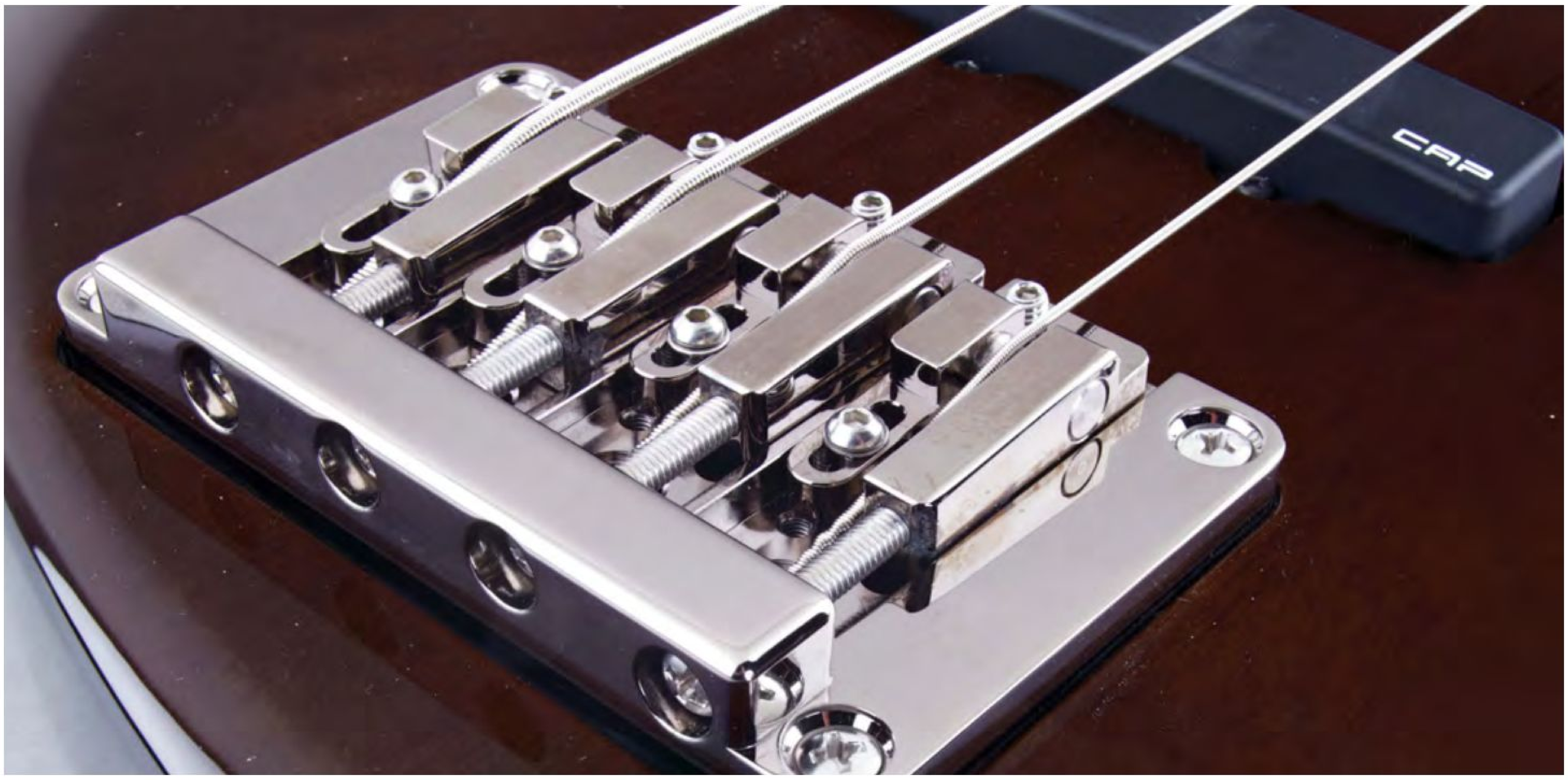
Find out more and spread the word about your playing experience

www.elixirstrings.co.uk/bass

*compared to original NANOWEB Coating **Elixir Strings player survey

GORE, ELIXIR, NANOWEB, POLYWEB, GREAT TONE · LONG LIFE, "e" icon, and other designs are trademarks of W. L. Gore & Associates. ©2015 W. L. Gore & Associates, Inc. ELX-496-ADV-EN-APR15

worldmags



"WE COULDN'T SAY THAT THIS BASS IS BEST SUITED TO ANY ONE PARTICULAR TYPE OF PLAYER OR GENRE OF MUSIC – IT'S EXTREMELY VERSATILE AND ADEPT AT DELIVERING THE GOODS NO MATTER WHAT STYLE YOU PLAY"

along the neck. The neck joint looks and feels very stable, the six-bolt attachment offering a good connection point, and the overall stability is enhanced by the inclusion of KT tone-resonant titanium to internally reinforce the neck.

Hardware

Black hardware is definitely the order of the day here, and though the bridge may look like chrome, it is in fact brass coated in black nickel, more of which in a moment. The twin CAP 'Sonic Arch' pickups sport curved tops to match the radius and camber of the fingerboard; a nice touch, but don't assume that these are standard single-coil Jazz-type pickups – they aren't. These are single-sized humbuckers with a blade pole piece wired to pickup pan, and three centre-detented EQ controls and an EQ bypass switch. Turning the bass over and having a look inside the control cavity, all of the pots and connections are clearly visible, with all the cabling tied back and simply laid out.

The Tight-End solid brass bridge is a top-loading bridge, so no through-body stringing here, but it certainly looks up to the job. Action and intonation can be easily adjusted but the string spacing is set at 19 mm. The side-mounted vertical jack socket is an interesting addition, meaning the jack plug and lead hang from the bass at a rather odd angle, but in use it is no more at risk than a standard downward-facing socket. Large strap buttons have been included for improved strap security, and battery access via the rear of the bass is nice and easy due to a flip-top battery compartment. Black Gotoh machine heads have been used in a two-a-side arrangement and these feel smooth and stable.

Sounds

The Grooveline has a very familiar Ibanez tone. The fresh D'Addario strings accentuate its inherent resonance, and though the bass projects a woody character in terms of its natural tone, it remains lively and vibrant. The response is very even across each string – the D and G strings are just as prominent as the E and A strings – and the upper register has a bell-like quality that's clear and free from any string buzz. Sweeping between the pickups with the EQ bypassed gives an indication of just how many tonal differences are available. The bridge pickup sounds warm and full, even without the EQ, and adding the E4 three-band circuit provides a hefty kick to the instrument's delivery, bringing a significant amount of power with a little boost, while the mid and treble controls add a massive amount of punch and clarity. Pushing the EQ to extremes highlights the forceful nature of the circuit. Backing off any of the three bands allows the bass to breathe a little easier. Used correctly, this circuit is capable of some quite subtle changes that can actually have a big impact on your overall tone, so working from a flat EQ setting and adding a small amount of EQ as required is definitely the way to go. Having said that, after some initial experimentation, the EQ bypass switch can become redundant, as without the EQ the basic tone is akin to watching black and white TV – functional and usable but not much fun.

We couldn't say that this bass is best suited to any one particular type of player or genre of music – it's extremely versatile and adept at delivering the goods no matter what style you play. All of the essential rock tones are there, and with some delicate use of the EQ, classic soul, reggae and jazz sounds can be easily coaxed, while adding some mid and treble EQ for definition opens up an array of funk and modern tones that require a brighter edge. In terms of tonal performance, this is one versatile machine.

Conclusions

If Ibanez were aiming to design a tonally versatile bass that offers exceptional comfort and playability, then they have hit the bullseye. You can really lean into the Grooveline and work with it rather than fight against it. The body curves are very accommodating and the slim-neck dimensions make the whole package thoroughly playable. However, when we were told the Grooveline would be priced at just over £2,000, you can't help but feel many players may opt to go down the custom bass route and have their own bass sculpted specifically for them. The limited finish options may be another stumbling block. Still, so much of what it has to offer is bang on the money.

LAKLAND

Skyline Series 44-01 Deluxe

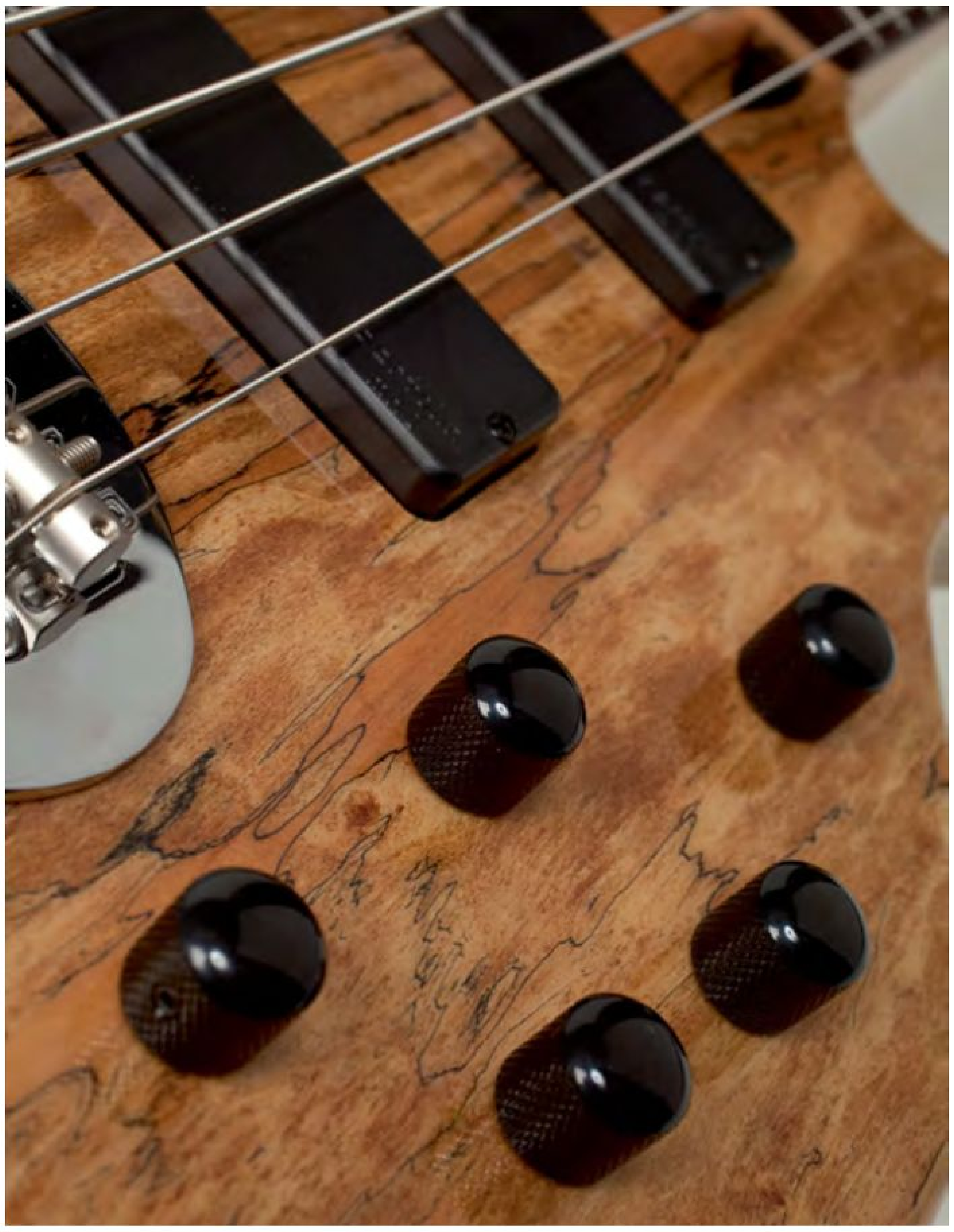
A 'cheap as chips' price doesn't have to mean a substandard sound. Mike Brooks finds out if this offering from Lakland is full of Eastern promise

The Gallery (Camden)
www.thebassgallery.com

Lakland basses are well revered: for a period in the late 90s to the mid-00s, they were everywhere. Indeed, most players of note and profile – and even some of no note and no profile – at that time could be seen sporting one. Trends change but quality does not, and although this latest offering from the budget-friendly Skyline series originates from Indonesia, don't let that fool you into thinking you know what to expect.

Build Quality

Well it looks like a Lakland, that's for certain, with its rounded curves and quasi-Fender/Music Man body style. The eye-catching but thin spalted maple top over a two-piece ash body with gloss finish does the business in grabbing one's attention. The classic natural look works well with the rosewood fingerboard, which comes with front position markers in a clay-like colouring and white side-markers. The body cutaways are appropriately shaped, with the lower cutaway offering more access to the neck than the upper one. There are some slim gaps around the five-bolt neck attachment, but the neck feels secure and solid, so this may just be a minor finishing issue.



The significant body dimensions give the instrument a solid, substantial feel, while the top body chamfer and rear contouring make it a really comfortable bass to wear, with no balance issues. The rounded, slim D-shaped neck profile, satin finish and general feeling of having been played in a bit give this bass a great feel. The neck is fantastically playable with its 19mm string spacing, no sharp fret edges in evidence and sleekness without the clinical nature or 'stickiness' of being new. This may be a cheaper model in the Lakland product range, but someone has designed and crafted a wonderful neck here, and the set-up is the icing on the cake.

The hefty chrome Lakland bridge offers through-body or through-bridge stringing, a nice feature at this price, while the Hipshot Ultralite machine heads are finished in brushed chrome: these improve the

Williamscot
BASS

PURE BRITISH CRAFTSMANSHIP

THOMAS AND GEORGE MARTIN
VIOLIN · MAKERS

Office: 01295 750 546 **Sales and information:** 07990 690 505 **Email:** george@williamscotbass.com **Website:** www.williamscotbass.com

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £749
MADE IN | Indonesia
BODY | Two-piece ash core with spalted maple top
NECK | Flat sawn maple, 34" scale
NECK JOINT | Bolt-on, five-bolt attachment
NUT WIDTH | 41mm
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
FRETS | 22
PICKUPS | Two Bartolini MK-1 split-coil soapbars
ELECTRONICS | Active Bartolini MK-1 three-band EQ
CONTROLS | Volume (push/pull for active/passive mode), pickup pan, bass, middle, treble
HARDWARE | Lakland bridge, Hipshot Ultralite brushed chrome machine heads
WEIGHT | 4.5kg
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED | No
LEFT-HAND OPTION AVAILABLE | No

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Great price, amazing playability, a wide tonal palette and fab looks
MINUS | No left-handed option
OVERALL | There is nothing to gripe about, this is a wonderful bass at a wonderful price. Buy with confidence

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□ (8/10)
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□ (9/10)
VALUE	■■■■■■■■■□ (9/10)

worldmags

instrument's balance and turn smoothly as you'd expect with this brand. The black, five-control layout comprises volume (with a push/pull facility for active/passive operation), pickup pan and a three-band EQ. A flip-top battery compartment has been used, which is always useful, and although the control cavity is a little messy, there is some shielding and it looks functional.

Sounds and Playability

This bass feels so great to play, and thankfully it has the sounds to match. Even with the EQ set flat, this bass has a real character to its natural tone, almost like a signature raspiness: this doesn't go away no matter how you EQ it. Thankfully none of the EQ is overpowering or extreme, it all sounds natural and useful with just the right selection of preset frequencies on the circuit. These enhance the natural characteristics of the instrument. If a smooth and rounded bass performance is your thing, this is easily achievable, but if you like to have an identifiable tone that stands out and rises above the band mix, head straight for that mid control.

Panning between each pickup, it is clear that each unit has a signature tone, yet there is no loss of signal strength or authority from either pickup, rather a consistency of tone that is replicated across each string. This bass is no shrinking violet, let me tell you: it didn't seem to matter what style of playing I threw at it, from pounding rock pedalling, a smidgeon of pick attack, groovy, funk-laden lines or fat reggae-style bass-heavy tunes, this bass really does cut the mustard. Although the treble EQ isn't glass-shattering in its percussiveness, for some players that may be a preference – and it's a small quibble considering how well this instrument performs across all the bases. The active/passive switching is also a bonus and the output level is perfectly usable without having to radically change your amp settings.

Conclusion

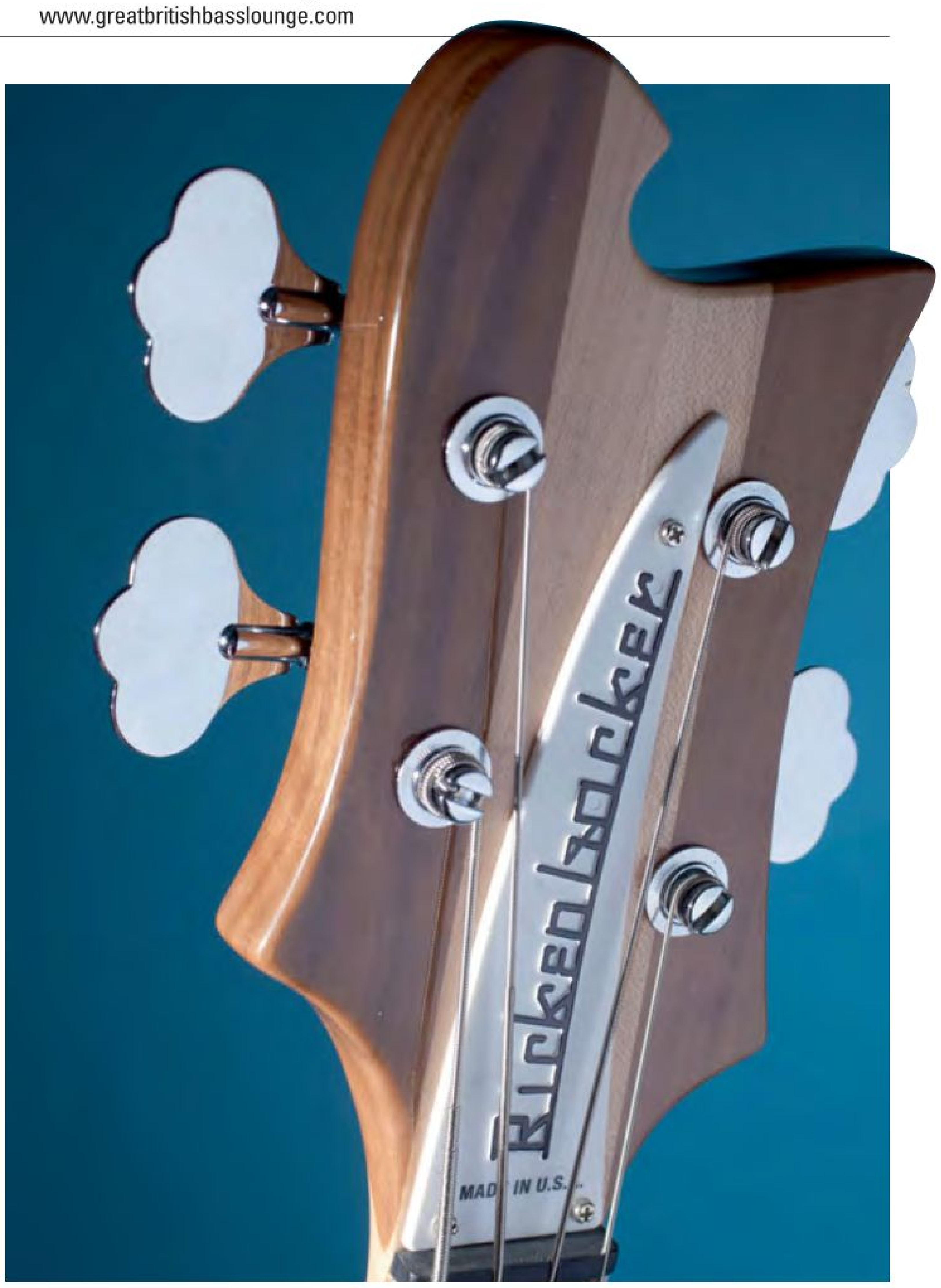
Be under no illusion, this bass is seriously good value for money, whether in terms of the tones on offer, the level of comfort or its playability. Visually, it is classic and modern looking at the same time, with enough bling to make you notice it without being too in-your-face. You really couldn't go far wrong with this bass, and as it lends itself so well to any playing style or context, it isn't difficult to understand why Lakland basses were the instrument of choice for so many players, and still are. I have no hesitation in recommending this bass for the money: it really is that good.

RICKENBACKER
4003 Mapleglo

Some of the greatest rock bass players in history have played a Ricky bass. The reason? Kev Sanders plugs in the iconic 4003 to find out

Rosetti
www.rosetti.co.uk

Great British Bass Lounge
www.greatbritishbasslounge.com



Few instruments have a tone and look that's as instantly recognisable as Rickenbacker's 2000 and 4000 series basses. First made in the mid-50s, they've been in and out of fashion for the last 60 years. They were a must-have for the prog-rockers of the 60s and 70s, and pretty popular with the metal players of the 80s, but maybe a little less often seen in the 90s. However, since then they seem to have become very, very cool again – and I think it's a design that looks better now more than ever. They sound great too, especially when loud. Just think of some of the bass players who've chosen a Ricky over the years: Lemmy, Geddy Lee, Chris Squire and, of course, that bloke from the Beatles...

Build Quality

The construction principles are the same as they always were: the two-piece thru-neck runs the entire length of the bass, with the body made in two halves and glued either side. At the other end of the neck, two small walnut wings make up the distinctive headstock with its cresting wave profile, a design motif that's mirrored in the shape of the top horn. The fretboard, like the headstock, is walnut, and the trademark large, white pearl triangular markers are immaculately inlaid. A unique aspect of the Ricky's fingerboard is its thick coating of hard, high-gloss lacquer. As well as protecting the board, this also helps to give the whole neck a smooth, fast feel, no doubt helped by the classic off-white ivory binding. The 20 jumbo frets are flattened, polished and finished to the same level of finesse as the black graphite nut: a sensible compromise to modernity. All the timbers used on the 4003 are the best quality, and for this Mapleglo version, the palest hard maple is used for the neck, body and top, the latter being flawless and shown off to its very best by the neat cream binding and that glassy finish, which is flattened and polished to perfection.

"AS A ROCK INSTRUMENT IT HAS HARDLY EVER BEEN BETTERED"

The hardware will be familiar to anyone who's ever played a Rickenbacker. The bridge is as beautiful as it is functional, and although it's a bit of a faff to adjust the string height and intonation, its substantial mass no doubt goes some way to helping produce that long, bell-like sustain. Talking of massive, the back pickup with its 'horseshoe' cover is the essence and soul of this bass, and its design and sound have played a huge part in the on-going success of these instruments. The rest of the hardware, like the Schaller machine heads and tone and volume pots, all work just as they should, and everything has a reassuringly over-engineered feel.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £2,649
MADE IN | USA
BODY | Maple
NECK | Maple 33¼"
NECK JOINT | Thru-neck
NUT WIDTH | 32.9mm
FINGERBOARD | Walnut
FRETS | 20
PICKUPS | Neck: 1x single coil. Bridge: 1x large single coil
ELECTRONICS | Passive
CONTROLS | Tone and volume for each pickup, vintage tone selector 'pull' function on bridge, tone control, three-way pickup selector
HARDWARE | Schaller, chrome
WEIGHT | 4.1 kg
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED | Yes
LEFT-HAND OPTION AVAILABLE | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | That sound is often imitated but never bettered. Great looks
MINUS | Not as versatile as some basses, although maybe more than you'd imagine
OVERALL | Music and styles may have changed since the 50s, but as a rock and metal bass, the Rickenbacker 4003 is as relevant today as it ever was

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

Sounds and Playability

First impressions count for a lot, and the large but narrow body is comfortable whether sitting or standing. The neck is a delight too; slim and shallow, with the flat frets and binding making the edges smooth and fast. It's interesting that when the first Ricky basses were made back in the mid-50s, bass players were moving across not only from double bass, but also from guitar, and it's because of this that we can enjoy the legacy of these super-slim and narrow neck profiles.

The essence of the classic Ricky rock sound lies in that back pickup. It may be primordial in design, but it set the standard for how a bass should sound, even before Leo Fender rocked up with maple, magnets and wire. Most Ricky players will turn both pickups and tones up full. The chunky three-way pickup selector gives them all the variation of sound they could need or want. Turning up and listening to that massive back or 'treble' pickup on its own for a moment, it's a perfect match for the dense maple body and neck materials. It's bright without being thin, and the simple passive tone control gives an impressive spread of sound between full on (which will take your fillings out) to merely bright, in a tight, high mid, almost compressed sort of way.

It's the classic Rickenbacker bass sound, and if you've never heard it, go listen to Chris Squire or Geddy Lee to hear how fantastic these basses can sound when recorded or gigged. A neat function is the 'Vintage Tone Selector' on the bridge pickup tone control. Pressed in, you get the familiar 4003 sound, but pull it up and you add even more bite and crispness, replicating the sound of the early 4001 bass. In this mode, it also seems to balance the gain levels between the two pickups a little more evenly.

The neck or 'bass' pickup couldn't be more different. Obviously it's tiny, almost like a guitar pickup, an impression that's made all the more stark because of the size of the bridge pickup. Perhaps because of its diminutive size, it's a little quieter than its big brother, but it has a warm, smooth sound not unlike the neck pickup on an old Jazz bass. It's a perfect complement to that massive bridge pickup: together they sound nothing short of awesome – the very essence of rock'n'roll bass guitar.

It's interesting to note that quite a few famous Rick players through the decades have played with a pick. As well as emphasising the naturally bright tone of the bass, the rear pickup cover is perfectly placed for resting your palm when you're playing like this.

Playing with the fingers is a bit more of a challenge if, like me, you're used to the pickup placement on a Jazz or Stingray. You can rest your thumb on the huge chrome cover of the back pickup, but it's a long way from the strings, and I found the best finger tones came from playing over the front pickup with your thumb resting on the strings, although may players remove the rear pickup cover, making that part of the strings accessible.

Using both the Rick-O-Sound outputs requires a stereo jack to two mono jacks. It's something most players never bother with, although it does give you the option of separately EQ-ing the pickups, which is ace, with the downside of course being that you then need two separate amp channels.

Conclusion

Previously, it's not been easy to get your hands on a new Rickenbacker 4003. For various reasons, they just weren't being shipped over here for a while, resulting in a long waiting list for some instruments. Recently they've been more readily available, and if you're shopping for a 4003 now, you shouldn't have to hang around for too long before getting your hands on one. Not that you'd regret the wait even if there were one.

As well as looking good, they sound amazing, and the simple yet versatile pickup and EQ configuration make them pretty much the perfect rock bass. This isn't really a bass for jazz soloing or slapping, but as a rock instrument it has hardly ever been bettered. There's just something about that bright, clanging sound that sits so well with distorted guitars, analogue keyboards and hard-hit drums.

worldmags

SANDBERG
ELECTRA SERIES TT AND VS

Two new examples from the Sandberg stable look to offer affordability and killer tone at a player-friendly price, Mike Brooks gives them the once-over

Synergy Distribution
www.synergydistribution.co.uk

The Sandberg team have been producing consistently high quality basses for a considerable amount of time, and their popularity in the UK has been gradually gathering pace over the last 10 years. What we have here are two basses from the new Electra series, designed to appeal to players on a limited budget who require a bass that delivers without costing the earth. Under review are the TT and VS models, based on Fender Jazz and Precision basses respectively: a Stingray variant is also available. How do these German offerings stack up?

Build Quality

Both basses are reasonably weighted around the 4kg mark, due in no small part to the basswood bodies. They feel substantial and solid, certainly not giving the impression of being lightweight. Surprisingly, both instruments exhibit a considerable headstock bias, but as with most basses, once you put on a strap either bass sits perfectly well on the player's body. The TT bass looks every bit the classic Jazz bass with its Crème High Gloss finish and red tortoiseshell scratchplate, but the VS bass suffers from its satin finish. The colouring and tone of the Tobacco Sunburst finish look great, but the choice of satin over high gloss is an acquired taste. The smooth bodylines and contouring are as you would expect on models such as these.

The TT bass follows the neck profile dimensions that one would associate with a Jazz variant: a sleek, fast Canadian maple neck with a slim profile and narrow nut width. The neck feels 'woody' and natural, in no small part helped by the satin neck finish. The frets are extremely well dressed with no sharp edges, and a good setup and action means this is an easy bass to adapt to, as it feels so familiar. Chrome hardware has been used throughout: a simple but effective three-way bridge design allows the string spacing to be adjusted to the player's requirements, set at 19mm from the off. The Californian open gear machine heads, taken from Sandberg's own California range of instruments, operate smoothly and a supplied Allen key allows the player to adjust the tension of the machine head axis to their liking, a nice touch.

> "THEIR REPUTATION FOR SOLIDLY BUILT, RELIABLE INSTRUMENTS IS DEFINITELY GROWING, BUT HOW WOULD EITHER BASS STAND OUT FROM A CROWD OF SIMILARLY SPEC'D, CLASSICALLY-DESIGNED BASSES?"

The chrome string retainer, Graph Tech nut and zero fret complete the neck hardware. The four-control layout comprising volume (with a push/pull operation for active/passive switching), pickup pan, bass and treble is simple yet effective with smooth, gradual increases and decreases from each control. The VP model has similar features in terms of construction, hardware and electronics aside from the inevitable single split-coil pickup, featuring one large single magnet for each string, a plain black scratchplate, black hardware and no pickup pan control. Both basses make use of fliptop battery holders on the rear of the bass and it's worth noting that both basses will operate in passive mode without a battery inserted, should that be your preference.

Williamscot
BASS
WHICHEVER WAY
YOU LOOK AT IT
THOMAS AND GEORGE MARTIN
VIOLIN · MAKERS
CLICK TO VIEW VIDEO
Office: 01295 750 546 Sales and information: 07990 690 505 Email: george@williamscotbass.com Website: www.williamscotbass.com

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

SANDBERG ELECTRA SERIES TT 4
PRICE | £569
COLOUR | Crème High Gloss
BODY | Basswood
NECK | Canadian hardrock maple
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
PICKUPS | Sandberg-designed single-coil x 2
ELECTRONICS | Sandberg-designed 9-volt active/passive, 2-band EQ
CONTROLS | Volume (push/pull active/passive), pickup pan, 2-band EQ (bass/treble boost/cut)
TUNERS | California open gear tuners
BRIDGE | Sandberg-designed bridge, three-way adjustable
MADE IN | Korea (assembled in Germany)
NUT WIDTH | 37mm
NECK | Bolt-on, six bolt
SCALE LENGTH | 34" (864mm)
FRETS | 22
WEIGHT | 4kg (8.8lb)
LEFT HAND MODEL AVAILABLE | None
GIGBAG/CASE | None

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A good all round bass that delivers everything you would expect a Jazz clone to offer. Sensibly priced, comfortable and playable, as it should be
MINUS | Just lacks the killer punch to stand out from the crowd
OVERALL | A sound purchase, solid, reliable with a good degree of tonal flexibility and classic looks

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

Playability and Sounds

Playing both basses acoustically, there is little tonal difference between them. The body shapes are obviously different and the neck dimensions feel different, although the VS neck doesn't display the familiar rounded, bulky nature that a lot of Precision necks offer. Putting the TT through its paces, and running both pickups at 100 per cent in the centre position, the bass displays all the classic tonal hallmarks of a twin single-coil Jazz bass, rounded with some zip in the top end and a throaty midrange that gives the overall tone some distinction. Adding some bass EQ works wonders, providing some solidity and power to the bottom end. Surprisingly, the treble EQ sounded a little excessive and extreme, so use with caution.

No matter which pickup was used or how the pickups were panned, the bass exhibits a defined woody character that may split opinion: personally, I thought it gave the bass an identity of sorts rather than conforming to the standard Jazz sound. Access to the upper frets was fine, but it became a bit of a reach where the neck joint occurs. On the subject of the neck joint, there was a slight gap around the neck pocket – but the neck was undoubtedly firmly attached to the body with its six-bolt attachment, so have no fear.

Bass
Guitar Magazine

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

SAVE YOURSELF SOME MONEY BY SUBSCRIBING TO THE UK'S NUMBER ONE BASS GUITAR MAGAZINE AND GET EVERY ISSUE DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR

FREE GIFT – VISIT WWW.VIRTUALNEWSAGENT.COM FOR THE LATEST OFFERS

DIGITAL EDITIONS AVAILABLE ON iPAD, iPHONE AND ANDROID

pocketmags.com

www.bassguitarmagazine.com T:01926 339808

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

SANDBERG ELECTRA SERIES VS 4
PRICE | £499
COLOUR | Tobacco matt
BODY | Basswood
NECK | Canadian hardrock maple
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
PICKUPS | Sandberg-designed split-coil x 1
ELECTRONICS | Sandberg-designed 9-volt active/passive, 2-band EQ
CONTROLS | Volume (push/pull active/passive), 2-band EQ (bass/treble boost/cut)
TUNERS | California open gear tuners
BRIDGE | Sandberg-designed bridge, three-way adjustable
MADE IN | Korea (assembled in Germany)
NUT WIDTH | 37mm
NECK | Bolt-on, six bolt
SCALE LENGTH | 34" (864mm)
FRETS | 22
WEIGHT | 3.7kg (8.1lb)
LEFT HAND MODEL AVAILABLE | None
GIGBAG/CASE | None

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A classic bass design with extra tone shaping, excellent feel and playability at a pocket-friendly price
MINUS | Some may see it as just another P-Bass clone, which it is, but it has more to offer through the active EQ
OVERALL | If you are in the market for a Precision-styled bass, this should be on your shopping list

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■■□□

"THE VS MODEL WAS EQUALLY IMPRESSIVE IN ITS SONIC DISPLAY, EXHIBITING ALL THE TONAL CHARACTERISTICS THAT A GOOD PRECISION BASS CLONE SHOULD"

The VS model was equally impressive in its sonic display, exhibiting all the tonal characteristics that a good Precision bass clone should, yet with some extra 'oomph' to boot. Naturally, the active setting offered more tone shaping and overall power, but the passive option was far from muted in comparison and showed that it was perfectly usable, either as the main tone or as the fail-safe option should it be required. The bass and treble EQ inevitably have a considerable impact on the tone and tonal options available to the player. With both added wisely, this really is a super-powered P-Bass with a considerable amount of body plus an equal amount of grit and twang.

Conclusion

What we have here are two price-conscious basses that are well made and have been designed to do the obvious things well. To that end, there is little to remark upon or complain about. As gigging instruments, I can't see anyone being disappointed by either bass as they are comfortable to wear, with a sensible weight and tonal options on tap to cope with most styles and playing requirements. The Sandberg name carries some weight and their reputation for solidly built, reliable instruments is definitely growing, but how would either bass stand out from a crowd of similarly spec'd, classically-designed basses? Neither bass carries an excessive price tag and they definitely fit into the 'what have you got to lose' bracket. If a vintage-style active Fender clone is on your shopping list, take a look, try them out and see if they fit the bill.

SPECTOR
Performer Four-String Bass

Spector has launched a pocket-friendly range of basses. Mike Brooks auditioned the Performer to see if it was worthy of a leading role

Barnes & Mullins
sales@bandm.co.uk

The Spector brand has come a long way from its inception in the mid 70s when Stuart Spector and Ned Steinberger developed the first NS basses. Despite licensing deals and company changes along the way, the Spector flag is currently flying high. In an attempt to bring the Spector brand to a more budget-conscious market, the Performer series of instruments launched in 2011 and we have one here on test. At just under £400, it comes as no surprise that many of the symbolic features associated with their higher-end ranges have been put to one side. So can Spector assemble a bass worthy of the Spector moniker or will it fall short of our expectations?

Build Quality

The recognisable body shape and headstock have been retained, so there's no disputing that this is a Spector instrument. The groundbreaking rear-curved body has not been incorporated but there is still contouring to the rear of the instrument. The basswood body has been finished in a fetching metallic red gloss but is also available in solid black should you opt for the dark side. The top body horn and overall body depth feel slightly thicker compared to an NS-styled bass – no bad thing and makes what could be a lengthy, slim instrument appear fuller and more compact.

The lower body horn and smooth curvy bodylines create a useful area on which to rest the bass when not using a strap and sat down. This does highlight a degree of neck bias in the balance stakes, but the slim neck dimensions and headstock shape help to limit the effect this has. Placing the bass on a strap, the instrument hangs horizontally, but the bass can be adjusted to your desired playing position with little effort as it's not exactly a weighty beast.

> "USING FINGERSTYLE, PICK AND SLAP STYLES IT IS QUITE EVIDENT THAT THIS IS NO ONE-TRICK PONY AND THE BREADTH OF USABLE TONES IS VERY SATISFYING"

The satin-finished maple neck is very smooth, with no rough patches, and the 24-fret rosewood fingerboard comes with lightly rolled edges, no sharp fret ends and pearl effect front and side position markers. The five-bolt neck attachment appears very tight, with no visible gaps between the neck and body, and the neck feels sturdy despite its slim profile. The black gloss headstock ties in nicely with the black hardware used throughout this bass, although the gold-coloured Spector logo

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £389
MADE IN | Indonesia
BODY | Basswood
NECK | maple
FINGERBOARD | rosewood
INLAYS | Pearl Dot
SCALE | 34"
NUT WIDTH | 41mm
FRETS | 24
TUNERS | Black die-cast
BRIDGE | Spector Performer Bridge
PICKUPS | 2 x EMG SSD (Stuart Spector Design) Passive Dual Coil
CONTROLS | 2 x Tone, 2 x Vol
HARDWARE | Black
WEIGHT | 4kg
CASE\GIG BAG INCLUDED | No
LEFT HAND MODEL AVAILABLE | No

WHAT WE THINK

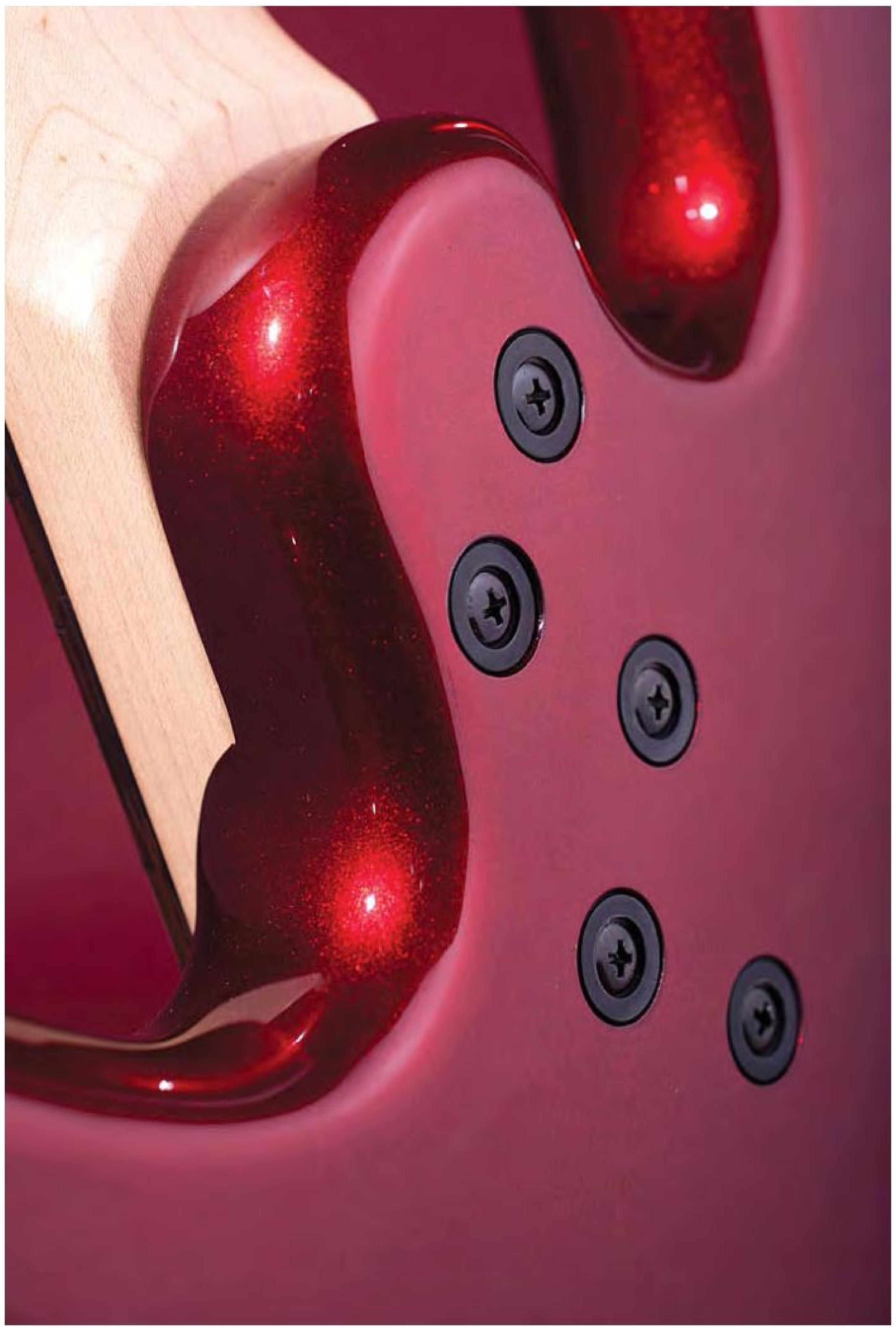
PLUS | All the Spector hallmarks at a fraction of the price, compact body styling, comfort, playability, quality of tone… what is there not to like?

MINUS | Fewer frills than a regular Spector and limited colour choice

OVERALL | A quality instrument at a bargain price that really delivers and offers great value for money

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE



> “STRING VOLUME IS CONSISTENT ACROSS ALL FOUR STRINGS, AND IN A GIG CONTEXT THE BASS PERFORMED WELL ABOVE ITS MODEST PRICE TAG”

stands out. The die-cast machine heads work perfectly well and operate very smoothly, and should you need to make adjustments to the truss rod, access is acquired via the nameplate on the headstock.

The Performer bridge allows for height and intonation adjustments, and although it looks simplistic, and it is, it does its job well enough. The gnarled metal volume and tone controls turn solidly and smoothly, while the dual EMG/SSD passive humbuckers have been designed with added mid range compared to a standard EMG HZ humbucker, so when plugged in there should be a greater degree of growl and bite to the tone. A quick peek inside the control cavity shows a very neat and tidy set-up, with all the cabling tied back and the cavity evenly coated in shielding paint.

Sounds and Playability

The Performer is extremely playable and comfortable to wear, helped in no small part by the slim neck profile, overall weight and excellent set-up. The neck width changes very gradually across the entire length so the neck is easily navigated. Sonically, the bass strikes you with an incredibly lively tone – no doubt the relatively fresh strings have a part to play, but the whole instrument feels resonant with an overwhelming sense of ‘twang’! The tone is naturally ‘bouncy’ yet a natural sustain adds to the overall character.

Plugging in, the initial sound is rounded and full-bodied with a pleasing amount of ‘sparkle’, which is a nice surprise. Running each pickup individually, the neck pickup offers a full, throaty tone, although using the tone control to remove some of the clarity can pay some dividends in taming the already remarked upon spring in this bass’s step. It also adds a nice ‘thump’ to the tone which works well with the brighter tones emanating from the bridge pickup once this is added to the mix.

Using fingerstyle, pick and slap styles it is quite evident that this is no one-trick pony and the breadth of usable tones is very satisfying. String volume is consistent across all four strings, and in a gig context the bass performed well above its modest price tag and sat incredibly well in a band mix, with just the right amount of body, power and clarity.

Conclusions

This bass has a lot to live up to but this is a very admirable foray into the cheaper end of the market and the Performer is aptly named as it puts on one hell of a performance! This is one of the most competent passive basses available and is easily worth its price tag. It may lack the pizzazz of other Spector models but it is more than capable of doing a solid, reliable job.

There is very little to complain about at this price and we can’t find any faults – it really is a bargain. Playability and comfort have all been taken into consideration and the result is an instrument that feels great to play and sounds just as good as it handles, offering outstanding value for money. Buy with confidence!

Johan L., quality check guitar

worldmags

www.thomann.de
thomann
MUSIC IS OUR PASSION

worldmags

STATUS SERIES 3

How do you follow up a genre-defining bass like the S2? You make the S3, of course. Mike Brooks dives in

Status Graphite
www.status-graphite.com

Despite the introduction of new models, new body shapes and new circuitry, Status's Series II is still considered the veteran British company's classic bass, with vintage models currently commanding high asking prices. The three-band EQ-equipped Empathy model superseded the Series II in 1991, which then became the S2-Classic in the late 1990s, and while the various Kingbass incarnations have flown the flag for Status since 2001, the S2-Classic is still extremely popular, with its crisp bodylines and sharp styling. Never a company to rest on their laurels, Rob Green and the team at Status have set about the task of taking this classic bass to the next level. Ladies and gentlemen, we give you the four- and five-string Series 3...

Build Quality

The Series 3 (the S3, as we'll call it) is a culmination of all the Status models; the company is now more of a custom shop catering for customer requirements within the Status product framework, as all the permutations of hardware, electronics, styling and finishing can be interchanged. The S3 fuses the fanciest elements and broadest tonal spectrum into one model, and these are the first examples.

Opening the Hiscox cases, I felt like I'd received some early Christmas presents – although they aren't for my personal enjoyment, unfortunately. I had expected something special, and I wasn't disappointed. The headed four-string features a sumptuous burr walnut facing, almost a marbled chocolate effect, on a two-piece American walnut body core. The contrasting brown tones and hues are impressive. The classic angular Status body shape has been retained, but the body now features an arch top and faux alder binding between the top and body core. I quickly noticed that the contouring and chamfering have been reduced, but the arch top works well and the body facing no longer rounds itself over the side of the body. Instead of the usual chamfer, there is a sharper body edge, which facilitates the faux binding, and makes the elegant lines stand out. A few simple line changes and design cuts have brought a classic shape bang up to date.

The moulded graphite neck features a dual action truss rod, a feature Rob has been incorporating for some time. Although neck tints are available upon request, this neck features the natural graphite weave. The neck looks like a set-neck join, but Rob explained that the neck actually reaches all the way up to the bridge pickup. The graphite is moulded into the body during construction, while the front facing is bonded onto the body in a vacuum press. The angle of the neck and fingerboard are uniquely set on each instrument, with the phenolic fingerboard being skimmed perfectly flat, all

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

STATUS S3 HEADED 4
PRICE | £2,995 (inclusive of LEDs)
COLOUR | Natural (tobacco stain on rear facing)
BODY | American walnut (two-piece) core with burr walnut / alder facing
NECK | Woven graphite moulded through-neck
FINGERBOARD | Phenolic
PICKUPS | Status humbucking soapbar pickups x 2
ELECTRONICS | 18-volt active, 3-band EQ (303 circuit)
CONTROLS | Volume, pickup pan, bass boost/cut, treble boost/cut, mid-range frequency (300Hz – 1.5kHz +/- 6dB cut and boost), mid flat/cut/boost switch
TUNERS | Status enclosed tuners, Schaller-style
BRIDGE | Status monorail, two-way adjustable
MADE IN | UK
NUT WIDTH | 42mm
NECK JOIN | Through-neck
SCALE LENGTH | 34" (864mm)
FRETS | 24
WEIGHT | 4kg (8lb 8oz)
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED | Hard case
LEFT HAND MODEL AVAILABLE | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A high quality instrument that delivers on all levels, capable of a wide variety of tones, built to last and extremely reliable. Extremely playable, great looks, an all-round great bass
MINUS | At a snip under £3,000, it isn't cheap – but you get what you pay for
OVERALL | As an example of the new range, consider your own preferences as all of the elements can be modified to suit the individual. A seriously great bass.

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

"THE SERIES 2 WAS A GENRE-DEFINING BASS, AND THE SERIES 3 REFINES ITS PREDECESSOR'S FEATURES AND VISUALS"

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

STATUS S3 HEADLESS 5
PRICE | £3,475 (inclusive of LEDs and stained top)
COLOUR | Aqua blue stain (front facing), amber stain (rear facing)
BODY | Mahogany (two-piece) core with masur birch / alder facing
NECK | Woven graphite moulded through-neck
FINGERBOARD | Phenolic
PICKUPS | Status humbucking soapbar pickups x 2
ELECTRONICS | 18-volt active, 3-band EQ (303 circuit)
CONTROLS | Volume, pickup pan, bass boost/cut, treble boost/cut, mid-range frequency (300Hz – 1.5kHz +/- 6dB cut and boost), mid flat/cut/boost switch
BRIDGE | Status monorail, two-way adjustable
MADE IN | UK
NUT WIDTH | 47mm
NECK JOIN | Through-neck
SCALE LENGTH | 34" (864mm)
FRETS | 24
WEIGHT | 4kg (8lb 8oz)
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED | Hard case
LEFT HAND MODEL AVAILABLE | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A great-to-play five-string bass that works on every level: the headless design has more than proved itself and the tonal flexibility makes this a bass worthy of the price tag
MINUS | A serious investment: headless basses don't work for some players
OVERALL | The S3 is a worthy update of the Status line and if you can justify the price tag you will be rewarded with a bass of immense quality, craftsmanship and tone

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

of which takes time and precision to get right. On this bass, there is no string retainer or zero fret, and the frets have been dressed meticulously with no sharp edges whatsoever: the overall set-up is wonderful. Furnished with a graphite through-neck, the S3's setup and action can be adjusted to the player's liking with relative ease: it remains extremely stable with virtually no movement, so no matter which string gauge you prefer, either bass won't present the player with any problems in that department.

The four-string model comes with a 19mm string spacing and a 42mm width at the nut, but this is compensated for by the slim dimensions across the whole length of the neck: think of a slim 'D' profile and you're almost there. The deep body cutaways make access to the upper frets remarkably easy. This bass has been fitted with blue wraparound LEDs along and over the top fingerboard edge, offering the necessary visual reference for the player and a little bling for the audience too. There are also white side markers but no front facing markers. This bass comes furnished with gold hardware throughout: the tuners feel solid and hold the tuning well, the controls turn smoothly and the bass comes fitted with the customary twin strap buttons at the bridge end of the body, offering the player a choice of playing angle.

The five-string bass is fairly similar in most departments, although this bass comes with black hardware: being headless, the player can choose to use double ball end strings or regular strings which can be cut to length and retained using the supplied grub screws. The body dimensions are identical to the four-string instrument, although mahogany has been used as the core wood. The aqua blue stained masur birch top is pleasing and the body looks slimmer than the older style Series II and Empathy body shapes, no doubt accentuated by the sharp-edged, precision-cut look. The gloss finish on both basses really shows off the timbers and from personal experience, it will offer the instrument extra protection from knocks and dings over time.

With a 34-inch scale, the dimensions of this five-string neck feel comfortable and although the fingerboard looks and feels quite broad, the 18mm string spacing, 47mm nut width and slim rear neck profile and depth shouldn't cause any fingering problems. This bass also has wraparound LEDs (the front LEDs can be turned off), white in this instance, with an additional set of LEDs in the lower front facing of the fingerboard. All of this requires two 9-volt batteries, although the four-string requires only a single battery. Both basses require two batteries for their 18-volt circuitry.

Both basses feature the same control set (volume, pan, three-band EQ with variable mid), and a quick look inside both control cavities show them both to be well shielded and neat and tidy, completed by the fact that all of the battery compartments use flip-top battery holders. The marrying of timber and

worldmags

graphite has always been an impressive combination, both in terms of looks and tonal performance, and these basses continue that tradition.

Sounds and Playability

Both basses balance well: the headed four-string exhibits a little headstock bias, but this disappears when placed on a strap. The five-string benefits from its headless construction: with no headstock to contend with, and the increased bulk of the five-string, the neck was easily adjusted to. Acoustically, both basses sound vibrant, resonant and punchy with plenty of spring, no doubt helped by the fresh strings and the individual bridge units that improve the overall sustain.

Plugging in and panning around the pickups of both basses shows just how much tonal quality these instruments have, and the proof is in the pedigree. Straight away, the five-string exhibits some fretless slither to its basic tonal character: coaxing a degree of 'mwah' from it is fairly straightforward should you want it. The 34-inch scale does make the low B-string feel a little baggy and overly supple, but the circuit more than compensates for this and the instrument's delivery is still tight and ballsy with plenty of power and grunt. The mid frequencies on offer really make a difference, especially with how you want the low B-string to perform, whether you want some definition and throatiness, some extra clatter and presence or some extra power to the bottom end. It's all here.

Both basses display a different tonal performance, as indeed they should: no two basses sound exactly alike. However, the Status character is there, determined by the neck and timbers, the circuitry and the pickups. The four-string feels incredibly slinky to play and in turn, this affects how you approach playing it. A Status newbie might be initially intimidated by the response and delivery powered by the circuit, but the scale, comfort and playability urge you to get stuck in: both of these basses have these admirable qualities.

Experimenting with the circuit reveals a diverse range of tones: both basses are fully equipped to deal with any style of playing or musical genre you wish to apply. Playing at home, both basses display clarity, power and a broad dynamic character, but it's not until you take them out and put them into a band mix that their real functionality and high level of performance becomes apparent. The clarity that makes every string stand out at home contributes to their ability to position themselves perfectly in a band mix, underpinning the band but offering enough projection and dynamics to add some sizzle and bounce to the bottom end.

Conclusion

Both of these basses exude quality craftsmanship, class and finesse. Although the price tags are high, it is readily evident where your money is going, and bear in mind that the LEDs are included in the price. The Series II was a genre-defining bass, and the Series 3 refines its predecessor's features and visuals with great taste. Tonally, it's not all twang and glassy treble: its top end complements the solid bottom end and mid-range fundamental with which the basses are blessed. Status basses have always been something to aspire to, and that hasn't changed. Quality costs, and is worth paying for.

Bass Guitar Magazine
BEE
10-STRING ATTACK!
DIVINITY ROXX
DIVINE BASS VIBES WITH THE FUNKIEST WOMAN ON THE PLANET!
PETER JOHN JACKSON
LET IT BE
FRANKFURT MUSIKMESSE
REPORT
DOUG WIMBISH'S
WIMBASH!
THE UK'S NUMBER ONE BASS GUITAR MA
STUART HAMM
BILL WYMAN
WOLFGANG VAN HALEN
MARKUS GROSSKOPF,
HELLOWEEN
GROG ROX,
DIE SO FLUID
CODY WRIGHT
NIGEL HARRISON,
BLONDIE
DANIEL FIRTH,
CRADLE OF FILTH
EXTRA CONTENT ON OUR DIGITAL EDITIONS
AVAILABLE ON iPAD, iPHONE AND ANDROID
VISIT
pocketmags.com
App Store
Oh, Suzi Q!
ON THE BASS GUITAR...
Ms. QUATRO!
HORACE PANTER, SPECIALS
DOUG WIMBISH, LIVING COLOUR
PAT BADGER, EXTREME
JOHN BENTLEY, SQUEEZE
STEVE HANLEY, THE FALL
LONDON BASS GUITAR SHOW 2015 PREVIEWS
STUART HAMM CONFIRMED FOR
WIN!
GIBSON EB BASS WORTH £700!
WE'RE ONE HUNDRED!
CELEBRATE WITH JACK BRUCE AS BGM HITS A HUNDRED BASS-PACKED ISSUES!

worldmags

WARWICK
Corvette NT LTD 2010

Touted as a 'Jazz Bass time machine', will the latest limited edition from Warwick take us back to the sounds of yesteryear or offer a new twist on a familiar tone? Mike Brooks ventures forth

Warwick
www.warwickbass.com

Warwick's limited edition instruments never fail to catch the eye and whet the appetite. We've been very fortunate here at *BGM* Towers to be privy to many of these fine basses, all of which have offered a variation on a familiar model from Warwick's existing catalogue, but with enough finesse to make them that extra bit special. Needless to say, the Corvette NT LTD 2010, based on the ever popular Corvette design, comes with plenty of unique features that set it apart from the crowd while retaining Warwick's hallmark 'sound of wood' association. Let's see how it handles.

Body and Neck

Whether you're a fan of the Corvette body shape or not, there is no doubting just how comfortable this bass is to play. The modestly sized swamp ash body and accentuated top horn work well together, and visually the combination of the heavily grained honey-coloured ash, the maple and ekanga neck laminates, and the richly coloured ziricote top wood makes the 2010 Corvette an instrument to behold. The ziricote used on this particular bass is quite wonderful, with the 'spider webbing' grain and unique figuring really setting this instrument apart. There is minimal contouring on the rear side and no forearm chamfering across the top bout, yet the body exudes an air of precision in terms of craftsmanship, and the expertly applied satin finish merely accentuates the fact that this is a class act.

Warwick has created a playable neck which fits perfectly in the player's fretting hand. The headstock maintains the customary Warwick shape with the ever present pearl 'W' inlay and a matching ziricote veneer. The rear of the headstock sports a number of unique touches: a lasered limited-edition stamp, the signature of Warwick president Hans-Peter Wilfer, a unique limited-edition number (our review model is number 110 of the 300 produced) and finally its serial number. The maple neck and ekanga laminates run the full length of the bass, giving the impression of a very solid, robust instrument that's also well proportioned and compact. Whereas some Warwick instruments have felt quite chunky in the neck department or overly long, the Corvette LTD 2010 feels as though the designers have got the dimensions, weight and balance spot on. The block position markers have been included and work very well with the contrasting shades of the light and dark timbers.

> "THE MAPLE NECK AND EKANGA LAMINATES RUN THE FULL LENGTH OF THE BASS, GIVING THE IMPRESSION OF A VERY SOLID, ROBUST INSTRUMENT THAT'S ALSO WELL PROPORTIONED AND COMPACT."

Hardware

The Corvette features black hardware throughout, starting with Warwick's own angled machine heads, brass 'Just-A-Nut III' and plastic truss rod cover. The 24 polished brass frets are each well seated, and Warwick have even thrown in a set of security straplocks for good measure.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £2,799
COLOUR | Natural
BODY | Swamp ash with ziricote top
NECK | Maple with ekanga veneers, neck-through
FINGERBOARD | Maple
PICKUPS | MEC twin jazz pickups
ELECTRONICS | MEC active 3-band EQ
CONTROLS | Volume (push/pull for active bypass), pickup balance, middle, bass/treble, 2 x 3-way pickup toggle switches
MADE IN | Germany
NUT WIDTH | 38 mm
SCALE LENGTH | 863 mm (34 inches)
FRETS | 24 medium jumbo
WEIGHT | 4 kg (8.8 lb)

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Quality craftsmanship, stunning playability and a diverse tonal palette.
MINUS | The price puts it out of most players' reach by some margin.
OVERALL | A quite superb instrument, but its limited nature and high price tag may restrict its appeal.

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■■
SOUND QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■□
VALUE ■■■■■■■□□□

worldmags

> "EVERYTHING ABOUT THIS BASS SCREAMS QUALITY. THE ERGONOMIC STYLING, FLEXIBLE ELECTRONICS PACKAGE AND OVERALL PLAYABILITY COMBINE TO PRODUCE AN OUTSTANDING BASS THAT ANY PLAYER WOULD BE RIGHTFULLY PROUD OF"

Both MEC jazz pickups come with a three-way toggle switch that allows each coil to be selected either individually or as a pair, providing a considerable amount of tonal variation. They're wired to a push/pull master volume control that doubles as a bypass for the active circuit, pickup blend, and an active EQ comprising stacked bass/treble and mid controls. The two-piece Warwick bridge is fully adjustable for string height and intonation, and a quick peek inside the control cavity reveals a well-shielded compartment crammed full of neatly laid-out cables.

Sounds

Reading Warwick's marketing literature for the LTD 2010, you're already expecting a certain sound and tone before plugging in. The famed 'sound of wood' mantra is clearly evident, and regardless of what you are playing in terms of style or application, the intrinsic qualities of the materials are conveyed in a very pleasing fashion. The fresh, new strings have a bearing on the overall tone, but what strikes you is the way the notes jump out at you. There is a tightness to the tone that lends itself to projecting each note and negating the need to play hard and forcefully. Having said that, the bass responds with a throatier tone when you really dig. The comfortable neck dimensions, married to the crisp delivery of the circuitry and pickups, makes slapping an absolute joy, and we were able to come up with a selection of different-sounding slap tones.

There is little doubt that this bass is capable of producing smooth, crisp, articulate tones, yet with a few control adjustments and using the various coil options available, it's transformed into a snarling bass monster! The circuit offers up a veritable palette of bass sounds. The simple control layout options make tonal tweaks quick and easy, while working through the coil-switching options really opens up the sonic possibilities. If an active EQ isn't on your list of requirements, simply engage the active bypass. The mark of a fine instrument is its ability to make the player want to play more, and we found ourselves returning to this bass time and again, as it was able to deliver so many quality tones.

Conclusion

Everything about this bass screams quality. The ergonomic styling, flexible electronics package and overall playability combine to produce an outstanding bass that any player would be rightfully proud of. But then we come to the price... At close to £3,000 this really is a lot of money to pay out, and sure, you're getting a top-line limited-edition bass, but in the current financial climate is this such a great deal when for this sort of money most luthiers will build you a bespoke bass of your dreams? Having seen most of the limited editions from Warwick over the past 10 years, the Corvette NT 2010 LTD is right up there with those that have gone before, but we wonder if it could actually become a model in its own right as the visuals are bound to appeal to a great many players. At this price we suspect many will simply dismiss it as unaffordable. Nevertheless, it is an absolute cracker, and given the opportunity to try one, make the most of it!

SANDBERG
...always by your side
Synergy
Synergy Distribution, PO BOX 10422, Tamworth, B77 1WE
www.synergydistribution.co.uk

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £457
MADE IN | Indonesia
BODY | Alder
NECK | Maple/nato 5-piece
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
INLAYS | Mother-of-pearl
SCALE | 34"
FRETS | 21
TUNERS | Chrome die-cast
BRIDGE | Vintage style
PICKUPS | Split Single Rear: Single Blade
CONTROLS | Master volume, master tone
HARDWARE | Chrome
WEIGHT | 8kg
CASE/GIG BAG | None
LEFT-HAND AVAILABLE | No

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A fine-looking, -sounding and -playing instrument that offers hugely usable sounds for aspiring players everywhere.

MINUS | A small design flaw – on the bridge pickup pole piece – made setting this bass up to optimum levels almost impossible.

OVERALL | A great instrument for beginners and intermediate players that will deliver tone in abundance – more advanced pro-level players may want to look for something a little higher up the Yamaha BB bass line.

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

YAMAHA
BB424 Standard Bass

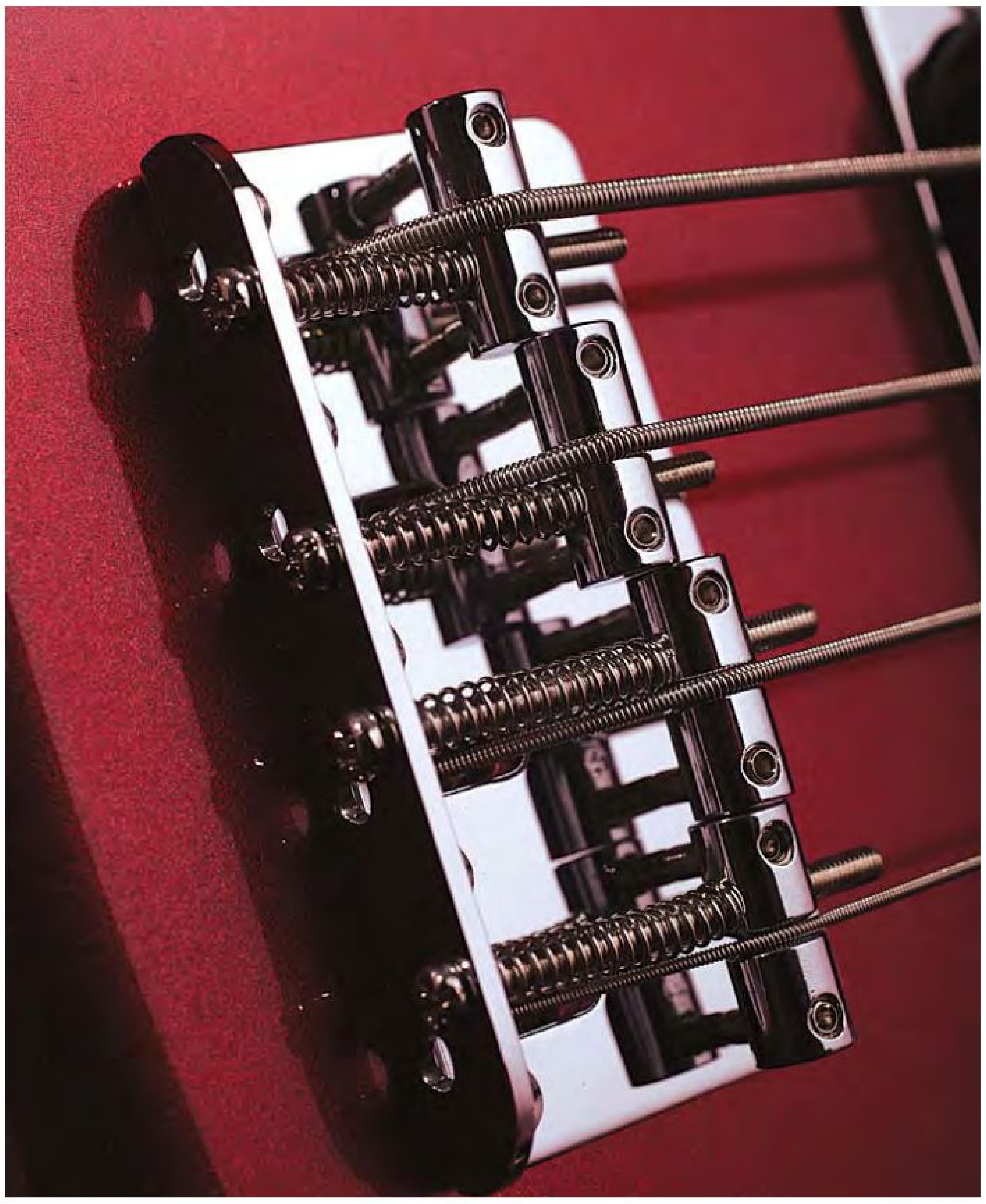
The BB series features basses at a range of prices. Is this mid-range model up to the line's rich history?

Yamaha
www.yamaha.com

Yamaha's world-famous workhorse BB series of basses have been the go-to basses for the likes of Nathan East, Tony Kanal, Michael Anthony and Lee Sklar for the best part of three decades. The series now features a wide range of classy models, from the super-deluxe glory of the BBNE2, Mr East's highly playable signature model, to this relatively humble but nonetheless highly practical BB424, which comes in at around one-sixth of the price. Mike Flynn assesses whether money saved means compromising on tone, looks and playability.

Build Quality

The BB series has a distinct look, that of an almost circular outline at the butt end of the bass, its scimitar-like curves ending in two stubby, unobtrusive horns, the lower offering great access to the upper frets. The metallic red finish is immaculate, the microsparkle creating a sports car-like shine. The through-body string holes are discreetly positioned under the tail-end strap button and enable a 45-degree angle to be created, which theoretically 'reduces stress' and improves string vibration, although in reality this is hard



to discern. But the craftsmanship here is also top-notch, with each hole capped by its own gunmetal-style ring. The vintage-style bridge is solid, and the metallic pickup surrounds and the split P and single-band J pickups look neat and ready for action. Likewise, the big chrome butterfly machine heads are immaculately finished.

The neck is the most aesthetically pleasing aspect of this bass, with its five-piece construction creating some understated detail on the headstock as the subtly contrasting maple and nato (sometimes known as eastern mahogany) woods add a nice design touch. The rosewood fingerboard is also finely worked, with impressive precision finishing on all joins, the four bolts into the body solidly mounted into individual custom washers.

The fret work is also hard to fault; the medium-width frets feel comfortable, creating a smooth playing experience. Another nice touch is the snugly recessed jack socket which sits on the lower curve of the body, showing off more design subtlety.

worldmags

> "THE NECK IS THE MOST AESTHETICALLY PLEASING ASPECT OF THIS BASS . . . THE SUBTLY CONTRASTING MAPLE AND NATO WOODS ADD A NICE DESIGN TOUCH"

Sounds and Playability

The BB424 produces some powerful tones from its split P and J pickup configuration, and the simple control set-up is extremely straightforward, with one master volume and one master tone knob and a simple three-way pickup selector. It's this straight-ahead configuration that enables you to dial in some very usable tones in a matter of seconds: for example, some burping mid-range jazz honks from the bridge pickup, a wide, flat, very usable sound with both on, or a really characterful P-Bass sound with just the neck pickup selected. By experimenting with the master tone level, some nice tones were achieved with most of the tone rolled off, through to more aggressive sounds biting through as more treble was added. This passive instrument is certainly no hi-fi, high-tech beast, but that's not what it's about, and if it's vintage sounds on a budget that you are looking for then you'd be strongly advised to give this bass a spin. The BB424's rich, thick tones with just the P pickup soloed would sit well in any vintage rock combo or some Meters-style funk, and for those of a jazzier persuasion some tasty fingerstyle bridge pickup sounds are also present and correct.

The fingerboard feels fast and plays beautifully, but for me the neck profile felt a little too square for comfort – a more circular radius would have made things even more comfortable. My main issue with this bass is its one Achilles heel: that of the single raised 'bar' pole piece on the bridge pickup. I'm a player who likes a bass to be playable, preferring a low action no matter what style of bass I play. Thus, setting up the bass by lowering the action to a level most players would consider reasonable meant the raised bar pole piece soon began to touch the strings, which meant raising them again. The issue here is that there seemed to be no means of lowering the bar on the bridge pickup; sure, it looks great, but in reality it actually obstructs the full playability of what, overall, is a fine instrument.

Conclusion

In a market saturated by Fender clones all offering similar sounds, the BB424 scores highly on build quality, looks and sound, and it's also very comfortable to play; as budget basses go, they really don't come a lot sweeter than this. Yamaha has proved again that their build and design quality goes right across the entire range of instruments.

Urban™ Series

Urban Bass Guitar Bag

Ideal for the gigging bass player

www.fusion-bags.com

FUSION™

worldmags

Bass Amps You MUST TRY

A fistful of bass amps for everyone!

Time was when a bass amp was an intimidating beast. If you needed a smallish combo for the rehearsal room, you could just about lug it around by yourself, although sometimes they felt as if someone had poured concrete into them during the manufacturing process. Anything bigger, though, and you were stuffed if you didn't have the funds to employ a roadie. Back pain specialists just loved bass players… Nowadays, all that has changed. You can make a hugely loud noise these days with a head that you can slip into a briefcase, assuming you've got a reasonable cab to hand – and many venues allow your bass signal to go straight to the desk, eliminating the need for any cabs at all. Here we've gathered a short list of cool amps for you to consider: a much greater range of loud boxes are covered in a year's worth of copies of our magazine, of course. Consider this a taster!

UK dealers

Bass Gear Ltd
44 01189 706925
bassgear.co.uk

Rock Star Guitar
0121 439 9662
rockstarguitar.co.uk

Sound Unlimited
0208 123 2477
soundunlimited.co.uk

Knighton Music
01547 528529
knightonmusiccentre.com

Mid Air Music
01634 846 886
midairmusic.com

worldmags

AMPEG
V-4B Head, SVT 212 AV Cab

Ian Glasper road-tests a reissued Ampeg. Surf that tube, dude!

Polar Audio
www.polaraudio.co.uk

Ampeg has always been a holy grail of bass amplification for many a discerning rock musician, and the latest addition to its roster – albeit a reinvention of the classic 70s V-4B model that helped build their reputation in the first place – continues this fine tradition. The reissued (or should that be re-released? Relaunched? Help!) V-4B may have been constructed in China, which some purists will no doubt find infuriating, but its look and sound are old-school Ampeg. It's 100 watts of pure tube, baby, so things don't get much warmer and fatter than this – and the neatly compact SVT 212 AV cab is just perfect for bringing out the best of this particular beast.

Build Quality and Features

Tubes make people nervous: they sound indestructible and yet are as fragile as butterflies in the autumn. Thankfully Ampeg has wrapped up its own in a 15mm birch cabinet reinforced with a metal chassis and covered in durable vinyl, its precious cargo cushioned with a built-in rubber-mounted suspension system. This review model was thoroughly tested – six live shows, four rehearsals and one recording session – and while it was treated with the greatest respect, it wasn't exactly handled with kid gloves either. Trust me, it may be lighter than it has any right to be, given the weight of sound it produces, but the new V-4B is a robust unit all right.

It's also deliciously simple. Less is definitely more when it comes to knobs (simmer down at the back there!), and Ampeg keeps it to the fundamentals. You turn it on, you plug it in, you turn it up. With that in mind, you have a main power switch and a standby power switch, supported by a red or green LED: the amp takes 30 seconds to warm up, but Ampeg recommends twice that long. It builds anticipation for the cathartic ritual ahead, y'see.

Two inputs, one for 0dB/passive instruments and a -15dB for actives await you, and gain and master switches flank some deceptively versatile EQ controls. Bass, midrange and treble knobs are enhanced with retro-style switches that deliver ultra lo, ultra hi, and a 1-2-3 selector for the midrange control. More on what these switches do for your ears in a minute.

Its rear panel looks more complicated, but everything is clearly labelled and super simple to hook up and use. You get a power amp in jack, a preamp out jack, a slave out jack, and a balanced XLR line out plus a noise reduction GND switch. Most importantly, for a Luddite like me, there are clearly labelled speaker outputs to help you get those all-important impedance ratings matched correctly (and improve the life expectancy of your tubes). With a big handle on top and big steel caps on the corners, it's all reassuringly solid.

On to the cab. Like the amp, it's deceptively light. You think it's going to bury you through the floor, but you'll be pleasantly surprised at how easily you can manhandle it on your own, and how you can load it into most cars. The complete opposite of any other Ampeg cab I've owned, in fact. Again, it's built to last, of a decidedly rugged construction, and nicely finished at the front with the celebratory Ampeg anniversary grille, in a tasteful electric blue – yes, that's what the AV stands for. The head is similarly kitted out. Don't worry, if you feel it's too garish, you can order a classic black grille instead.

Inside this powerhouse exterior is... you've guessed it, a powerhouse interior. The two 12" Eminence speakers will handle pretty much anything you can throw at them, and there's a 1" compression driver for added bite, controlled with a three-level attenuation switch at the back of the enclosure. It's topped off with deep, chunky footwells for your amp to sit into safe and sound, so you don't vibrate it off the top of the cab with all those sub-sonic frequencies. Boom!

Sound Quality

As you can imagine, this all-tube amp has a lot of heart and a lot of guts, with the honest warm sound that you just can't find in too many places other than Ampeg. When you drive the gain, it rocks like nothing else, but there are also some sweet, clean tones and classy, mellow sounds. The piano-like quality when you mix the mids right is especially desirable: that perfect spacious fusion of twang and snap for slapping.

The many combinations of the bass, midrange and treble pre-amp controls are versatile enough, but throw in the vintage rocker switches and there's some real fun to be had. The three-position mid-range switch allows you to choose which one of three mid frequencies you either cut or boost. Play around with these and this stack really starts to snap and growl. There's a particularly pleasing squelch to the low end for Metallica-like breakdowns, and if you palm-mute your downpicking, the added staccato is not dissimilar to being hit about the head with a railway sleeper.

At the gigs where this amp was pressure-tested, regardless of poor acoustics and substandard PAs, the V-4B never failed to cut through the mix like a knife as well as garner looks of envy from every other bassist in the building. In fact, it's one of the few amps your reviewer has used where I haven't needed my beloved Sansamp. Even with everything set flat – on both guitar and amp – this rig leaves most other amps out there in the dust, with a pulsating heft to its low end, an incredibly punchy middle and a searing top end.

The 12" speaker is a decent compromise between the immense bottom of a 15" and the punchy attack of a 10", and you've got two of them in the SVT 212, so it's not lacking in either the power or clarity departments. It copes perfectly well with bowel-loosening death metal, right through to percussive funky slapping, never compromising subtlety of tone for brutish power. That said, there's power here in spades. You can feel it in the soles of your feet.

Conclusion

Put quite simply, this is about as good as it gets in bass amplification. You'd have to go an awful long way – and then a bit further – to match the quality of sounds on offer here. The V-4B and SVT 212 combo strike an almost ideal balance between convenience of size, lethal power and range of sounds.

"PUT QUITE SIMPLY, THIS IS ABOUT AS GOOD AS IT GETS IN BASS AMPLIFICATION. YOU'D HAVE TO GO AN AWFUL LONG WAY – AND THEN A BIT FURTHER – TO MATCH THE QUALITY OF SOUNDS ON OFFER HERE"

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

AMPEG V-4B HEAD
PRICE | £1290
POWER OUTPUT | 100 watts
INPUTS | ¼" 0dB / -15dB
CONTROLS | Master volume, gain, bass, middle, treble
FEATURES | Built-in suspension system
REAR PANEL | Power amp in, pre amp out, slave out, XLR out
DIMENSIONS | 24" W x 11" H x 11" D
WEIGHT | 18.6kg

SVT 212 AV CAB
PRICE | £755
POWER HANDLING | 600 watts
IMPEDANCE | 4 ohms
FEATURES | 1" compression driver (tweeter)
DIMENSIONS | 24" W x 25" H x 16" D
WEIGHT | 30kg

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Tone range, controllability… oh, everything!
MINUS | Hefty price tag
OVERALL | Worth every penny if you're serious about your tones

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

worldmags

ASHDOWN

AAA Vintage 12, MAG C112-220 Combos

Kev Sanders road-tests two budget combos from Ashdown. Will they emerge unscathed?

Ashdown Music
www.ashdownmusic.com

Ashdown's AAA (standing for 'Access All Areas') range consists of a 220-watt head and seven different combos, ranging from a tiny 10 watter up to 220 watts. The Vintage 12 sits third in the range and is clearly designed to be big enough to cope with rehearsals and small gigs, while still compact enough to be a practice amp. As for the second combo on test, well, the MAG series from has been around for years, always offering great quality, features and value. Will the new C112-220 combo continue that tradition?

Build Quality and Features

Henry Ford would have liked these amps, as there's not much here that isn't black. The Ashdown corporate vinyl covering, the tough woven nylon grilles, the strap handles and plastic corner protectors, even the amp panel on the Vintage 12, are all black – although the control knobs and badges are a rather tasteful ivory colour, and the MAG C112 has that familiar retro-looking VU meter next to the input. Close inspection of the construction and components reveal that they're as well put together as any of the Ashdown range, the vast majority of which is now, like these two, manufactured at Ashdown's facility in China.

The Vintage combo boasts a healthy 75 watts, and although the preamp is comprehensive (three band EQ, hi and low inputs, drive control and a headphone output) there isn't much on the front panel to differentiate it from many other smallish bass combos currently available. That said, you do get an XLR DI, which is very welcome for recording, and an auxiliary input with mix control, meaning you can plug in your MP3 player or phone for hours of playalong fun. So far, so unexceptional – but this amp, like many of the new AAA practice amp range, has a real show-stopper of a feature: the AppTek input, which allows you to use your iPad or iPhone as an external preamp, once you've downloaded the appropriate app.

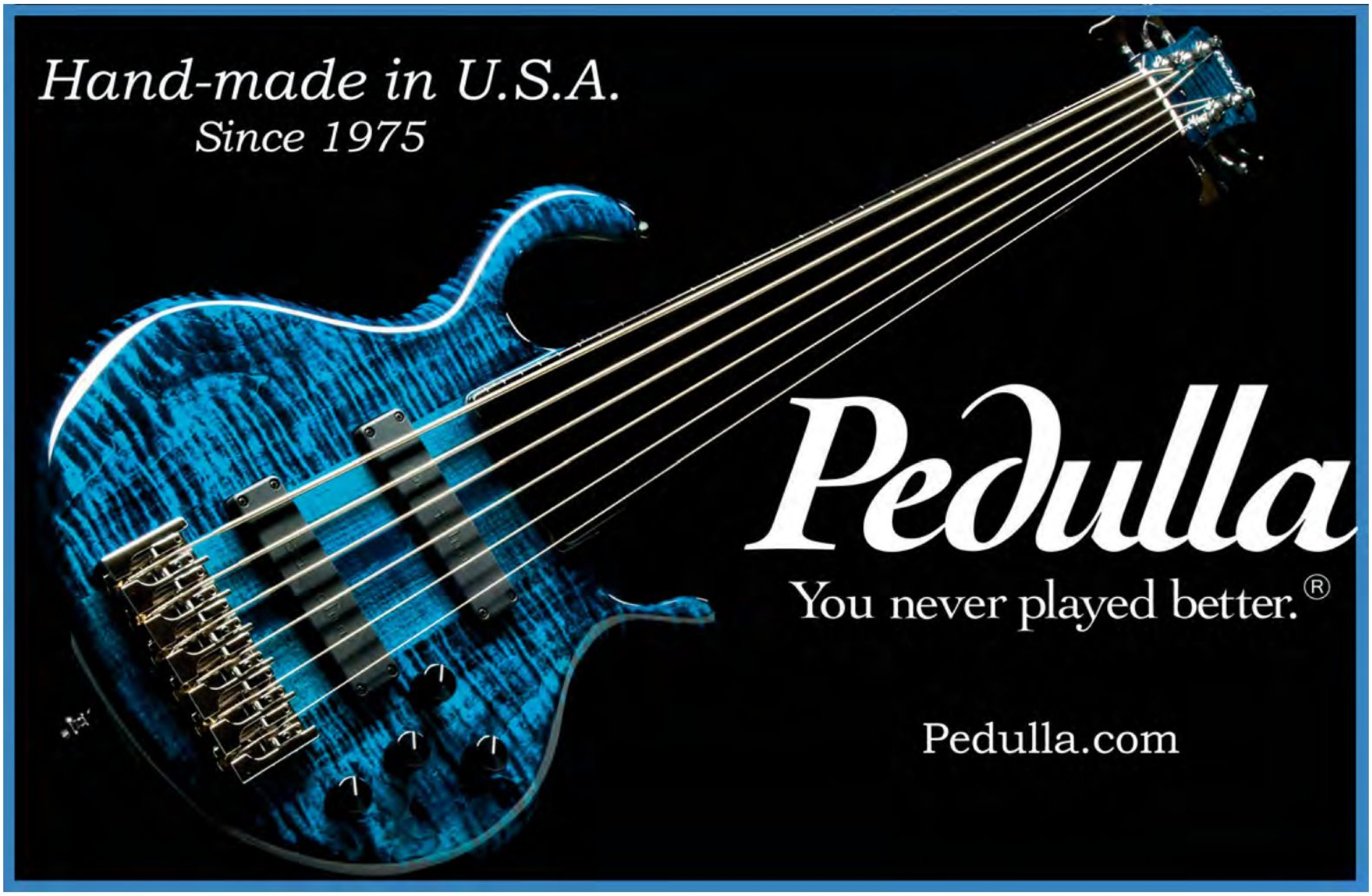
The AppTek function is an input on the front panel of the Vintage 12 into which you plug one end of the special cable provided, the other end going into your tablet or your phone. It's basically a mini effects loop on a stereo mini jack. The idea is that you download one of the Ampkit apps from Ashdown's software partner Agile. Inside the app, you can buy the Ampkit+ app, which gives you a wide selection of amps, cabs and effects to use. Once you've done this, you have all the ABM 900 control panel has to offer, with features such as sub-harmonics, tube drive, compression and of course the comprehensive seven-band EQ. You can also choose from the selection of cabs and mics available and add dozens of guitar and bass effects by way of virtual foot pedals, all of which can be edited and added to your sound. It's great fun and seems to work brilliantly well.

The MAG 220 amp head in the C112 combo is a much more comprehensive unit, with five-band EQ plus compression and drive functions. It also has a sub control, which lets you add frequencies an octave below the note played: useful for enhancing the low end. All of these effects plus the EQ can be switched in or out via buttons on the front panel. Round the back, the combo continues to flaunt its pro credentials with a Speakon extension speaker output, FX loop, jack DI out and line in, although perhaps surprisingly, no XLR DI for recording or gigging. Like the smaller Vintage 12 amp, the MAG has a single 12" custom-built Ashdown driver, but here it's augmented with a piezo horn unit.

Sound Quality

Once we're in the studio with the bass plugged in, it soon becomes clear that as a practice amp, the Vintage 12 fulfils its brief brilliantly. The well-chosen EQ frequencies and warm, valve-like tone mean that finding a great bass sound to work with is quick and easy. For practice or rehearsals, there's more than enough volume and low end here to upset the neighbours. The Ampkit+ app through the AppTek facility, plus the 'aux in' feature makes using the amp for

LEGENDARY BASS STRINGS SINCE 1958
BILLY SHEEHAN
STEVE HARRIS
MARK KING
ROGER WATERS
GEDDY LEE
ROTOSOUND
PROUDLY MADE IN ENGLAND
FIND OUT MORE
WORLD FAMOUS MUSIC STRINGS
WWW.ROTOSOUND.COM • FACEBOOK.COM/ROTOSOUND • TWITTER.COM/ROTOSOUND_UK


Hand-made in U.S.A.
Since 1975
Pedulla
You never played better.®
Pedulla.com

worldmags

practice great fun, with loads of options for playing along to backing tracks, recording yourself and adding effects.

As a small gigging amp, the Vintage 12 handles more than you could reasonably expect, but you do have to be realistic. While the 12" driver is extremely high quality for a combo at this price point, the amp is only 75 watts, and it's this that will determine just how far it can be pushed before clipping. At these higher levels there's also a slight lack of very high end sparkle, which is not surprising given the fact that there's no horn or compression driver to handle the highest frequencies. However, in real-world situations, the amp delivers above expectations and if you consistently need more volume and a wider frequency range, you'd be better off going for the more powerful MAG C112 anyway.

For such a small combo, the MAG C112 really delivers. The much bigger amp plus the addition of an HF unit means that not only is it way louder than the Vintage 12, but it also has much more headroom and a sweeter, brighter top end at higher volumes. Of course, it's still small enough to function as a practice amp, but here's an amp which is just as happy in the studio or small venue, and the extension socket on the back panel means it's a simple job to add an extra cab, pulling the full 220 watts from the amp and further increasing its potential for gigging. The comprehensive five-band EQ, effects and routing facilities mean that there's much more choice with the C112, and even my old '62 Jazz with its exhausted original pickups can be moulded into something like a tight modern sound, with bags of low end kick and top end sparkle.

Conclusion

Even five years ago you rarely found an 'aux in' socket on a practice combo. Ashdown has not only included one on the Vintage 12 and on most of their other practice amps, but they've also had the foresight to design in the AppTek feature, suddenly bringing the humble bass practice combo kicking and screaming into the 21st century. I'm surprised this kind of thing hasn't become mainstream earlier, although there have of course been plenty of modelling amps available for some time. This system is limited only by the external software and available apps.

All this software and app stuff wouldn't count for much if you didn't have a good bass amp to work with, and the new AAA Vintage 12 isn't just a vehicle for this new technology, it's also a great little bass amp in its own right. You could quite easily buy this amp, plug in and enjoy it without ever using the AppTek feature, but to do so would miss out on the thing that elevates it above some of the competition.

The fact that the MAG C112 doesn't have the AppTek feature underlines the kind of situation in which Ashdown envisage this amp will be used. Yes, of course it will still work brilliantly as 'just' a practice amp, but it's more than up to the job of rehearsals and recording – and as part of a modular system with an extension cab hooked up, there won't be many small and medium gigs it wouldn't be able to handle. Its diminutive size and flexibility will make this amp popular with a whole range of players, whatever their needs, and the incredibly low price of both this and the Vintage 12 should mean that both are a big success for Ashdown.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

AAA VINTAGE 12 / MAG C112-220
PRICE | £269 / £399
INPUTS | 2 [hi/lo] / 1 [3.9m/10K Ohms]
POWER | (RMS) 75 watts / 220 watts
SPEAKERS | 1x12" custom / 1x12" custom plus piezo HF horn
EQ, AAA Vintage 12: Bass +/- 15db @ 100hz. Lo Mid +/- 15db @ 340hz. Mid +/- 15db @ 660hz Hi Mid +/- 15db @ 1.6Khz. Treble +/- 15db @ 7khz shelving
EQ, MAG C112-220 Bass +/-15dB @ 100Hz Lo Mid +/-15dB @ 220Hz Middle +/-15dB @ 660Hz Hi Mid +/-15dB @ 1.6kHz Treble +/-15dB @ 7kHz shelving Deep +
DIMENSIONS | (mm) (WxDxH): 410 x 330 x 480 / 540 x 390 x 335
WEIGHT | 20 kg / 22kg

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Two good quality combos from Ashdown. The Vintage 12 is elevated to something really special once you add in the Apptek functionality. The MAG C112 is a flexible all rounder with a great preamp
MINUS | No XLR out on the MAG C112. No Android platform apps yet for the AppTek function. Both a little uninspiring to look at
OVERALL | Ashdown's keen quality control means the Vintage 12 is a real bargain. The MAG C112 is also great value and although no bigger than the Vintage 12, would make a great one-stop amp for nearly any situation

BGM RATING

AAA VINTAGE 12

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■□□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■■□

MAG C112-220

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■□□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■□□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■■□

HARTKE
HD25 And HD50 Combos

Dave Clarke has a heart to Hartke with a range of highly portable combos

Korg UK
www.korguk.com

Rightly or wrongly, combos falling into the category of 'practice amps' tend to be used in small rehearsal spaces, intimate live settings for acoustic gigs and, of course, for getting a bit of practice. Needless to say, bassists joined at the hip to bombastic drummers, or treading the boards of larger venues, require more powerful set-ups. However, amps of this stature are a useful addition to any bass player's arsenal and are often the entry point for bassists cutting their teeth.

As Hartke is one of bass amplification's big names, I was particularly interested in trying the two smaller models from the US company's HD combo series. While the range includes more powerful 75w and 150w models, I got to try out the HD25 and HD50, which as their model numbers suggest are 25w and 50w, respectively. Do they cut it? Let's have a look...

Build Quality and Features

The HD combos all come equipped with Hartke's patented HyDrive aluminium and paper hybrid speakers, attached to a ceramic magnet. The HD25 houses an 8" speaker, while that of the HD50 is 10". The top-mounted amp panel features volume, bass, mid and treble controls, a 1/4" headphone socket and a 1/8" aux input, with the amplifiers protected by a handy built-in limiter. (For the record, apart from the obvious difference in size and power output, the HD75 and HD150's 12" and 15" speakers are backed up by 2" tweeters, a seven-band EQ and, in the HD150's case, an XLR direct output.) Hartke's sleek black and silver aspect, perforated black metal grille and moulded top strap handle make for pretty mean looking pieces of kit, with the lightly pimpled black vinyl covering providing the combos with a neat finishing touch that should provide just enough purchase to stop your phone from vibrating its way onto the floor while you're playing. It's a no frills set-up, but at these price points, it could be argued that you shouldn't expect too many.

Sound Quality

Placing the combos side by side, the HD25 looks tiny compared to the HD50, itself still reasonably small but possessing just that hint of big-brother cool. Sonically, the HD25 delivers an awful lot of punch for its 24.9 pounds. Its robust tone and surprising output was beyond my initial expectations and, after a few minutes, I became aware of my neighbour's estate agent showing a potential buyer around his house. Had the diminutive HD25's relatively big punch just sabotaged a sale? Sure, with the volume cranked up, the 8" speaker was moving like the

> "WE ARE LUCKY TO BE LIVING IN AN AGE WHERE THE MARKET IS DOING AN AMAZING JOB OF MEETING MODERN BASSISTS' EVER-GROWING EXPECTATIONS"

worldmags

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

HARTKE HD25 AND HD50
PRICE | HD25 £119.99, HD50 £203.99
POWER | HD25 25 watts; HD50 50 watts
SPEAKERS | HD25 8" hybrid cone driver; HD50 10" ditto
FEATURES | Volume, bass, mid and treble controls, 1/4-inch input for active/passive bass guitars, 1/8-inch stereo Aux input allows for stereo line level devices (MP3 players, keyboards), 1/4-inch mono headphone output; built-in limiter
DIMENSIONS | HD25 19"x17.5"x13.5"; HD50 20.5"x19.5"x15.5"
WEIGHT | HD25 24.9lb/11.3kg; HD50 30.6lb/13.9kg

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Great tones for this price, useful features
MINUS | HD25 doesn't quite stand out enough
OVERALL | Useful pair of combos, of which the HD50 is easily the best

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

"HARTKE HAS DELIVERED A COUPLE OF ROCK-SOLID COMBOS"

characters in *Roobarb* (look it up on YouTube, kids!), and it eventually began to distort with the volume set at 8/10, with the bass EQ turned-up to the max (or 'reggae', as I like to call it). For all the many positives, the HD25 still had the slightly hollow sound that you might expect from a combo of its size, and I never quite achieved a tone I was satisfied with. However, should we expect miracles from a tiny combo costing just over £100? Of course not: horses for courses.

Any doubts as to the anti-social qualities of the HD25 were quickly superseded when I plugged into the HD50. The difference between the two combos is huge, with the superior qualities of the 10" HyDrive speaker blowing its smaller sibling out of the water. I first started playing bass back when Noel Edmonds was still socially acceptable – back then, amps of this size weren't much use beyond your bedroom.

Seriously, though, the output of the HD50 is superb, with a warm low end, a tight middle range and the speaker's aluminum section helping to deliver Hartke's trademark crisp attack on the top end. It's all very satisfying and equally impressive. The EQ controls are pleasingly responsive and, in conjunction with the EQ on my bass, I was able to dial in an array of tones to suit the requirements of most genres. The HD50 will comfortably handle a small venue scenario, working on the assumption that John Bonham reincarnate isn't about to make an appearance on drums.

Conclusion

We are lucky to be living in an age where the market is doing an amazing job of meeting modern bassists' ever-growing expectations. Hartke has delivered a couple of rock-solid combos at an extremely reasonable price, and both the HD25 and HD50 possess the ability to comfortably handle just about every drop of power placed under their hoods. In my experience, this wasn't always the case, with many smaller combos of yesteryear sounding like brutal flatulence the moment anyone tried to combine volume with (no pun intended) the bottom end. That's not the case here, particularly with the HD50, which, for an extra £80, is head and shoulders above the HD25. Both are compact units, so I see little reason to buy the HD25 unless you are on an extremely tight budget or live in a cupboard: even then you'd still get great value. The real bang for your buck, though, is in the HD50. It's a gem in its class.

MESA
Boogie Bass Prodigy Four:88

Dave Clarke takes a look at Mesa's prodigious bad boy

Westside Distribution
www.westsidedistribution.com

In all my years as a bassist, only occasionally has my aching back been spared by the luxury of a willing roadie. This has meant that the pursuit of my dream bass sound has often been less than thrilling, largely due to accumulated hours spent dragging, pushing and lifting awkward and heavy bass related equipment from A to B. Mercifully, as has been well documented within the pages of *BGM*, the size and weight of those pesky cabs, amps and combos has been decreasing in recent years.

Micro amps, of which there are some real superstars on the market, have been welcomed with open arms by many bassists, who simply crave an easier gig. I freely admit to being one of those players, enjoying technology's convenient advancement. However, I'm also a total sucker for a fat-as-America bass sound – and that means I'm talking tubes, and all the warmth and feel that comes with them. But that has also invariably meant having to deal with substantial size and weight issues, which can be a real drag, man.

So what we need is someone like California's Mesa Boogie to come up with a massive-sounding tube amp about 7½" in height, 16¼" wide and 9½" deep, weighing less than 30 pounds and named the Bass Prodigy Four:88. They have, you say? Nice.

Build Quality and Features

As I was lifting this potential dreams-come-true-maker from its box, I remember thinking to myself that anyone complaining that the Bass Prodigy's 29 pounds is still 'a bit too heavy' simply needs to man up. I'm not the only one out there with first-hand experience of lifting Mesa Boogie amps, and rarely have they been anything other than the weight of Jupiter. In this respect, 29 pounds is a revelation.

Make no mistake, this isn't anything like one of those diminutive Class D solid-state micro amps. This is an extremely powerful all-tube bass amp head.

Aesthetically, the Bass Prodigy looks stunning. Once switched on, a team of blue LEDs illuminate the front panel and grill to form a striking contrast against the valves, visible through the rear grill, glowing in rock and roll's favourite shades of orange. It's a slight disappointment, though, that switching the amp on isn't accompanied by the same

> "ONCE SWITCHED ON, A TEAM OF BLUE LEDS ILLUMINATE THE FRONT PANEL AND GRILL TO FORM A STRIKING CONTRAST AGAINST THE VALVES, VISIBLE THROUGH THE REAR GRILL"

worldmags

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £1850
MADE IN | USA
POWER | Output 4 tubes at 250watts or 2 tubes at 125watts
WEIGHT | 29lbs
DIMENSIONS | 7½" H x 16¼ W x 9½ D

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A truly superb portable tube amp. Tones to die for
MINUS | Prohibitive price tag. No Speakon socket
OVERALL | A triumph!

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

sound made by the Ghostbusters firing up their nuclear proton guns. Such a sound would befit this awesome-looking unit (note to Mesa Boogie: do it!). Standing on four chunky rubber feet, the amp also has a simple carrying handle, housed inside the body and easily accessed.

So what's under the hood? Well, the Bass Prodigy Four:88 has a tube power amp and preamp, featuring four KT88 power tubes and three 12AX7 preamp tubes. The Class A/B Multi-Watt power amp provides two power options via a full/half power switch: four power tubes producing 250 tube-watts, or two tubes producing 125 tube-watts. At this point I'm obliged to point out that tube-watts are really, really loud, like solid-state-watts on steroids, which is very handy for quieter situations, allowing the user to make full use of the amp's tube tones and warmth.

The amp's front panel features an adjustable bias control with an LED indicator to accommodate wider tolerances found in the KT88 power tubes, a jack input that has a three-way select switch for active, normal and bright, while the all-tube preamp features gain, active bass, passive mids, active treble, a five-position active voice switch and master volume controls. In addition, there is also a DI level control and a solo level control for the optional Prodigy footswitch, and tip-to-ground, on/off or latching footswitches.

Alongside the power and standby switches, the front panel's controls are completed by a mute switch, ground lift, pre/post select and silent record, which allows direct preamp output from the Balanced XLR located on the rear panel, without the need for a speaker cabinet, allowing full use of the amp's qualities when recording, without having to disturb anyone within a three-mile radius.

The rear panel also features a DI out socket, footswitch socket, a tuner output jack, FX loop send and return jacks, slave out and three ¼" speaker output jacks (1x8 ohm and 2x4 ohm). Perhaps surprisingly, there is no Speakon socket, but with Mesa Boogie's aim to create a portable tube amp there probably wasn't room.

Got all that? Great. Nurse, pass the Stingray...

Sound Quality

With the EQ controls set at noon and the gain set at 11 o'clock, from the moment I plugged in I had a killer sound. To my delight, within another minute or so I had dialled in the sound that's been residing in my head for years, filed under 'My Perfect Bass Sound'. Trust me, no Class D solid-state amp I've ever tried has sounded this good. Then again, we are dealing with tubes here (I know, I know – what did I expect?) but, still, this was off-the-scale good and, metaphorically speaking, capable of inducing in this bassist a plump middle wicket. *(I say, steady on old boy – Ed)*

As you'd expect from a Mesa Boogie amp, the Bass Prodigy has more headroom than you can shake a stick at, and with the master volume set at 9 o'clock I was already moving a lot of air. Just a few degrees more on the dial and I thought my diaphragm was going to collapse!

> **"I'M OBLIGED TO POINT OUT THAT TUBE-WATTS ARE REALLY, REALLY LOUD, LIKE SOLID-STATE-WATTS ON STEROIDS, WHICH IS VERY HANDY FOR QUIETER SITUATIONS"**

However, sheer volume is far from everything and, thankfully, the most pleasing aspect of the Bass Prodigy is its truly wonderful depth, warmth and clarity of tone, of which there is an abundance. Whether I was playing with my fingers, slapping or using a pick, the Prodigy delivered a full, rounded and satisfying sound every time. Further dynamics are aided by the pleasingly effective five-position voice switch, which enhances and emphasises your EQ sweeps. If desired, adding more gain serves to overdrive the tubes to suit, instantly evoking the spirit of many of my all-time favourite albums, all of which were made in the days when amps of this size, power and look were still the stuff of science fiction.

At this point a friend who had joined me for the evening took his enjoyment a step further by placing his head right up against my cab's speakers while I did my best attempt at a medley of Bernard Edwards' basslines. Sadly, his response was unprintable in a family magazine such as *BGM*.

Conclusion

There's been a lot of anticipation around Mesa Boogie's Bass Prodigy, and I'm delighted to conclude that it really does live up to expectation. It's a truly awesome bass head, with wonderful tones that sound warmer than a desert storm and fatter than a sumo wrestler, while retaining clarity and definition to die for. However, with the pursuit of my personal perfect sound seemingly at an end, there is a catch: the pricetag.

It's a sobering thought that to own a Bass Prodigy you're going to need to part with a hefty £1850, which is prohibitive for the majority of bassists, myself included.After recently spending my bass budget on an expensive custom job, it'll be some time before I've saved the necessary Hovis to purchase one of these. Until then, I can at least take solace in the memory of what was a hell of a one-night stand with the Bass Prodigy.

★LEGEND★

GLENN HUGHES

ORANGE AMPLIFICATION

follow us:
orangeamps.com

worldmags

BAREFACED
Super Compact 12 Cabinet

Kev Sanders tackles a compact cab from the Barefaced stable. Will it cut the mustard?

Barefaced
www.barefacedbass.com

Barefaced was started in 2008 by Alex Claber. You may remember Alex from his *BGM* column 'But this Goes To Eleven?': he's passionate about bass cabinet design, and with three generations of development since the start of the company, these Super Compact 12 cabs represent the real cutting edge of compact bass cab and speaker design.

Build Quality and Features

Despite the traditional looks, the construction of the Compact 12 is based soundly on science and the latest acoustic design principles. All bass cabs are built to be rigid: they need to be, but most manufacturers try to achieve this by using thick and dense plywood to construct a simple six-sided box to put the speaker in. Some add an internal 'front to back' brace or two. This obviously works to a degree and it's an inexpensive way to build them, but it can have the unfortunate side effect of making the cab extremely heavy and resonant.

The Barefaced Super Compact 12, like all Barefaced cabs, uses relatively thin 9mm dual-density ply, but it's constructed around a complex internal structure of interlocking panels, which not only makes the whole thing incredibly rigid, but almost unbelievably light. The internal bracing panels support the external sides of the cab in such a way that there are no equal lengths of unsupported cab wall, minimising resonance. It's all clever stuff, and if you want to know more (much, much more) about the thinking behind the construction of these cabs, the Barefaced website has tons of additional information.

The single 12" driver is pretty special too. It's an Eminence unit, custom-made for Barefaced, but with an ingenious twist to the original design. The small centre dust cap is attached to the central tube that the voice coil is formed around, rather than glued to the speaker cone as usual. This little detail makes a big difference in that the dust cap itself can vibrate independently from the rest of the speaker, producing frequencies higher than the speaker cone could alone. An extra bonus is the improved midrange dispersion and a cooler-running voice coil, adding to the efficiency of the speaker. It's an idea that was used on early Lowther speakers and some ATC monitors, but as far as we know this is the first time it's been used for a dedicated bass driver.

So, a cabinet made in-house from best quality materials and a custom lightweight and efficient neodymium bass driver – this is shaping up well. How about the finish? The good news here is that it's smart, durable and looks great. It's a hard, sprayed-on, textured coating similar to that sometimes seen on pro PA speakers. The chrome corners are a nice retro touch and if you prefer even more of a vintage look, for a bit extra you can specify a silver grille cloth rather than the black steel version that comes as standard.

The Super Compact 12s are rated at eight ohms, and on the small back panel there are two dual-purpose Speakon/jack sockets, meaning you can link two cabs together for a more powerful rig.

> "THEY SEEM PARTICULARLY WELL SUITED TO ROCK AND SOUL GIGS; THE KIND OF JOB WHERE YOU MIGHT WANT TO USE AN OLD-SCHOOL PRECISION OR JAZZ, AS THE NATURAL TONE SEEMS TO SUIT THIS KIND OF SOUND PERFECTLY"

Sounds

It was obvious that these cabs would need more than just a home test in the studio, so I took them off to work and used them on a good cross-section of gigs including a big stage set for a festival, a small concert theatre gig as part of a compact double bass rig and finally into the studio for a recording session. Before any of that though, they were given a thorough going-over to see how they sounded in a quiet environment.

Hooking them up to a Markbass Tube 800 gave a solid, muscular sound with an incredibly detailed midrange. Although the cabinet has no HF driver, you certainly don't miss the high frequencies at these lower volumes, and overall I'd describe the sound as focused and warm. There's a slight change as you stand further off-axis, but not much, and they should sound good to a wide area of the audience.

In the studio the Super Compact continued to impress, not least because the live room is up two flights of stairs and carrying it up was less effort than bringing up the tray of coffees before we started! In the acoustically neutral live room the cab sounded fantastic and the recorded sound was open, detailed and with the kind of weight to the low end that you'd normally expect from a 4x10.

Expecting a single cab to do all things brilliantly is unrealistic, and using the cab for a double bass gig revealed that the Super Compact 12 is better suited to reproducing electric bass in a rock or soul situation. The sound was good, and the lack of feedback very impressive, but the Compact 12 isn't designed to reproduce the mile-wide frequency range put out by the double bass, although the midrange was reproduced with stunning accuracy.

However, I've saved the best until last, because linking two of these cabs together for the festival gig was genuinely amazing. Remember, what we had here was two single 12" cabs with no HF units and a footprint little bigger than a small combo. Using the same 800 watt amp that we'd used for the initial tests, we plugged in my old '62 Jazz bass and the sound was astonishing, with a fat and focused bottom end that

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £549
SPEAKER | 1x12" Custom Eminence with Neodymium magnet
CONNECTIONS | 2x ¼ Jack/Neutrik (parallel)
POWER | 150-600W RMS
FREQUENCY RESPONSE | 37Hz to 4kHz
IMPEDANCE | 8 ohms
DIMENSIONS | (HxWxD) 560 x 440 x 300mm
WEIGHT | 11kg / 23.5lbs
EXTRAS | Fitted cover and silver grille cloth available at extra cost

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Huge low-end punch, lightweight and a great price. Two of these cabs will make a portable rig that will handle most gigs
MINUS | Nothing
OVERALL | British-made and designed and quite possibly the best compact and lightweight bass cabs available today. If used with a decent amp, a single cab should be more than adequate for most small gigs or rehearsals

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

seems completely at odds to the size of the cabs. You want loud? Well here it is, with no discernable distortion unless dialled in from the amp. The cabs sounded like a rig twice the size, with a level of definition and presence that could only be down to the cabs' super-rigid design.

Conclusion

Don't be fooled by the traditional appearance of the Barefaced Compact 12. This is as advanced as bass cab design goes, and you'd be hard pressed to find another bass speaker that would match it for performance at any price. These cabinets work well in a wide range of applications, but to hear them at their best you'll need to crank up the volume and stand back.

Any decent 1x12 cabinet will sound OK being driven by a high quality powerful amp at lower volumes, but where most start flagging, the Super Compact 12s are just getting into their stride. They seem particularly well suited to rock and soul gigs; the kind of job where you might want to use an old-school Precision or Jazz, as the natural tone seems to suit this kind of sound perfectly. Impressive.

worldmags

MUSIC MAN
Bass Amps

Wait a minute. Amps with 'Music Man' written on 'em? Duff Battye investigates...

Strings & Things
www.stringsandthings.co.uk

First off, this is not a strange case of mistaken identity, perhaps with some factory somewhere putting the wrong labels on the wrong amps. You see, while they are well-respected bass guitar manufacturers, with endorsees of the calibre of John Myung of Dream Theater, Cliff Williams of AC/DC and Gail Ann Dorsey of David Bowie's band, Music Man has not in recent years been known for its amplification. But, despite being away for almost three decades, they are back. Let's see if they cut it!

You'd expect a company with the standing of Music Man to produce top-quality amplification to sit alongside their lovely range of basses – and on finding out that to re-launch their amp range they drew on the expertise of Italian designer Marco De Villgellis of DV Mark and Markbass fame, our excitement for these amps was tangible.

The first thing that struck me when the head, cab, and combo arrived was their size. In this age of tiny bass heads, cabs, and combos, the packaging had a reassuringly large feel to it. The second thing was how easily the deliveryman was carting them around. Once unpacked and signed for, it was clear that the delivery guy was not a late entrant for World's Strongest Man. While this range looks very un-Markbass, it shares one important factor – it's lightweight.

I remember when I first started playing bass; I wanted a big amp behind me moving a whole lot of air in front of me. Several years later, I loathed that enormous rig. As did my back, and the many sets of stairs that had felt the impact of said amp dropped down them. So for me at least, it's a really nice touch to keep the size of the rigs but use modern technology to cut down on the weight without any loss of power.

The old-school appeal doesn't stop there. The thing that really draws your eye to the amp is the on/off switch, a very un-fancy stainless steel toggle switch that drops down into the 'on' position with a lovely clunk and lights a simple red indicator. A clunk of yesteryear, if you will – when bands were made by relentless gigging, not by people I don't know swinging around on chairs *(Calm down, Grandad – Ed)*.

The head, cab and combo all continue this robust and simple theme, with matte black bodies, silver mesh fronts, and a discreet and classy Music Man logo. Plain black and white dials on both the BH-500 head and 115-B 250 combo give you plain options: input, gain, treble and bass. Then there's an EQ section with footswitch option, plus interesting, non-graphic-equaliser-style dials at 67 Hz, 184 Hz, 510 Hz, 1.4 kHz and 3.8 kHz. The front section is rounded off by a volume master and the aforementioned on/off switch. No fiddly effects that generally don't work. Just an amp with knobs on it, which change the sound, and look as if they'd laugh in the face of an unintentional ride down a set of venue stairs.

As you'd expect from such a simple design, the sounds are relatively straightforward. The 500W head aligned with the 8x10 cab really puts out some serious power. There is less chance to become pre-occupied with tweaking minor graphic settings and the sounds remain crisp and clear up the range. The bass can be played gently, and the basic nature of the tonal options, to me, means it is less confusing.

The 115-B 250 combo would work fine in most rehearsal or gigging situations. The basic layout of the amp head is the same, and so are the tonal options. It also has a nice modern twist with a tilt in the speaker to face upwards. As many combos will be used in live settings without monitors, this is a really sensible option, to put the sound where it needs to be. The tones are crisp and clean with plenty of options to add after market effects.

Music Man is definitely back in the amp market. They may have used the amp designers behind the fabulous Markbass range, but they haven't simply copied an existing idea. They have used the strengths of power, playability, and lightweight amps and married them to a more traditional styling – both feature wise and size-wise. So many amps are loaded with irrelevant extras: these amps are not.

"MUSIC MAN IS DEFINITELY BACK IN THE AMP MARKET"

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

MUSIC MAN BH-500 HEAD
RRP | £749.99, £1249.99
POWER | 500 watts
FEATURES | Four-band EQ, plus bright, contour and vintage controls, overdrive circuit with on/off, drive and level, effects loop 1/4" send and return, 1/8" aux input, 1/8" phones output, optional footswitch input, removable front grill

115-B 250 COMBO
RRP | £749.99
POWER | 250 watts
FEATURES | 1x15 speaker, four-band EQ, plus bright, contour and vintage controls, overdrive circuit with on/off, drive and level, effects loop 1/4" send and return, 1/8" aux input, 1/8" phones output, optional footswitch input, removable front grill, external speaker output with ground lift

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Build quality, incredibly lightweight, stylish old school design
MINUS | The name lacks the track record of its competitors
OVERALL | Simple styling and light weight backed up with fantastic sound quality

BGM RATING

BH-500 HEAD	
BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■■
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□
810-BS CAB	
BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■■
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□
115-B 250 COMBO	
BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■■
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□

worldmags

TC ELECTRONIC BH800

Ian Glasper goes toe-to-toe with this feisty TC amp. Who wins?

TC Electronic
www.tcelectronic.com

Designed in Denmark, manufactured in Thailand, and weighing in at just three kilogrammes, this tiny bass head seems like any bassist's chiropractic fantasy. Despite its small mass, it's a sturdy lil' mofo, with a metal chassis and a brushed red, anodised aluminium front plate, that is not only almost indestructible but understated and classy at the same time. There are rack mount-style handles on the front – not that you'll ever need to grab hold of it with two hands, of course – and it is equipped with big, fat, über-chunky rubber feet more befitting Godzilla than Godzuki. Beware, though! Despite those impressive plates of meat, this head is so incredibly light, it's in danger of being vibrated off some unsuspecting cabs; for the trial sessions, I had to put a coat on top of the speaker to stop the head committing hara-kiri. Actually it's so solidly constructed, I wager it would bounce back up and just keep on rocking, but I didn't want to put that theory to the test…

Build Quality and Features

It's rather handy to have a tuner built in, and it's extremely accurate too, once you develop the right sensitivity and get used to lighting the two green LEDs. The BH800's tuner has a frequency range for up to six strings, and it's always on, which makes for a pretty light display during your set, so you can keep an eye on those open string tunings as you play too. There's a mute switch for when you want to actually tune yourself up between songs without annoying everybody, too. Bizarrely, they only put five string indicators on the panel (there's plenty of room for six), so if you're tuning C, you'll need to light up D and G together.

The sounds direct from the amp are more than worth your dollar, but there are some downloadable effect options too, which open up hundreds of new avenues regarding tone. These are really useful if you're a jobbing musician swapping between bands of contrasting styles, and should save some room in your kit bag when it comes to pedals. While some might find the pre-loaded effects slightly naff, you

> "DESPITE BEING SMALL AND LIGHT ENOUGH TO HOIST WITH JUST YOUR LITTLE FINGER, THE BH800 STILL MANAGES TO FEEL ROBUST ENOUGH TO THROW AT YOUR DRUMMER"

Bass Guitar Magazine

DIGITAL EDITIONS
AVAILABLE ON iPAD, iPHONE AND ANDROID
VISIT pocketmags.com
Available on the iPhone App Store

worldmags

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £499
INPUT | ¼" jack
POWER | 800 watts
IMPEDANCE | 4 ohm minimum load
CONTROLS | Bass, Lo Mid, Hi Mid, Treble, Gain, Master Volume, 2 x Tone Print effect slots
DIMENSIONS | 11" x 9.5" x 2"
WEIGHT | 3kg

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Seriously, what's not to like with an amp this robust and this light, that sounds this good, for such a paltry price?
MINUS | Watch you don't vibrate it straight off the top of your cab and into next week
OVERALL | The downloadable TonePrints are a neat idea. This is some seriously powerful circuitry for your dollar

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■□□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■■□

can download all sorts of rather rad TonePrint effects endorsed by the likes of Duff McKagan, Nathan East and Victor Wooten. With the free-of-charge TonePrint app you can download them to your smartphone and straight into the amp, or via the USB port in the rear, which can also be used for upgrading the head's internal software, should the need arise.

There's a switch to toggle between the two effect channels, and there are two TonePrint dials, so you can choose how much or little of your chosen effect you dial in: these act as a wet/dry mix control for most modulation effects, but also control depth of chorus or speed of vibrato on others. The technology is pretty intuitive, and it all seems simple enough to use, and it's a rather saucy concept to be able to constantly customise your amp whenever the mood takes you. These effects can also be controlled by pedal, if you care to hook one up with the jack socket in the rear. There's also a headphones/speaker mute output, which – when used in conjunction with the auxiliary input next to it, allows you to play along to songs you need to rehearse when the kids are in bed.

The Speakon cable connections caught me by surprise, and I had to rush out and buy one for this review, but it ensures a nice tight connection once screwed into place. You can drive more than one cabinet off the head too, as long as you get the loads right (four ohms minimum), and there's a balanced EQ output for DI-ing to PA or desk, complete with a handy pre/post EQ switch. As well as pre/post EQ, this switch determines whether your signal is lifted pre/post TonePrint effect as well.

One last feature that was obviously not put to the test during the review trial, but could save you a lot of money one day, is the automatic protection mode. If the amp overheats, or short circuits, the speaker output mutes automatically to minimise cabinet damage, but the balanced output still passes audio, so the show can go on. If only every amp I'd had over the years had been thus equipped...

Sound Quality

The BH800 was run – rather ruthlessly, I should add – through both Hartke and Ampeg cabs. For such a dinky unit it's awesomely powerful, and really moves some serious air for such a small head; you stand in front of your cab when it's being assaulted by this little beast, and the sound is a physical presence slamming against the back of your knees. There's also an 'intelligent' EQ system, which the technical bods assure

"I WAS ABLE TO TEASE BOTH A DELICIOUSLY DEEP AND DIRTY DUB TONE AND A SHARP ATTACKING PERCUSSIVE VIBE WITH JUST A FEW MINOR ADJUSTMENTS, AND THE 'HI' AND 'LO' MID OPTIONS ADD EXTRA VERSATILITY"

me doesn't just boost one frequency when you turn a knob, but several, actively contouring your sound.

Now, to this old philistine, that could be a great line in snake oil, but whatever the science behind it, the head sounds sweet and rounded, and the EQ is both smooth and subtle. I was able to tease both a deliciously deep and dirty dub tone and a sharp attacking percussive vibe with just a few minor adjustments, and the 'hi' and 'lo' mid options add extra versatility. With some time invested in its myriad intricacies, this little box will reward you for your trouble. There's a peak warning indicator by the gain control which lets you know when your signal starts clipping, so you can easily tweak the master volume and gain to get maximum db with minimum distortion... or vice versa, if you're a grind head.

Conclusion

Despite being small and light enough to hoist with just your little finger, the BH800 still manages to feel robust enough to throw at your drummer when he drops his umpteenth stick during the first song of your set – and it sounds great. You see, size really isn't everything, and big things often come in small packages. Feel free to add whatever other clichéd platitudes you like here – they're all true!

Bass Effects you MUST TRY

Get your size 12 Doc Martens on – we've got some serious stomp boxes to step on...

In 2015, the effects world is a bass player's dream. Every possible version of every possible tone you could possibly dream of is available in multiple units. Some of today's amazing units are tiny, some large; some pricey, some startlingly cheap; some reliable, some as consistent as a monkey with a typewriter. Check out these cool effects pedals, just to whet your whistle!

worldmags

AGUILAR

Chorosaurus Chorus

Aguilar's latest chorus is a proper tyrannosaur, warns pedal pro Joel McIver

Barnes & Mullins
www.bandm.co.uk

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

RRP | £219
MADE IN | USA
FEATURES | Blend, rate, intensity, width controls, DC in, standard in/out
POWER | DC, 9v battery
WEIGHT | 480g excluding battery

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | No loss of bass. Repeat, no loss of bass!
MINUS | Rear screw might get lost
OVERALL | A beast of a chorus. It might even withstand extinction by asteroid

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

Readers of a certain vintage will remember with a shudder the days when you'd buy a chorus pedal for £20, plug it in and manfully pretend that it made your bass sound good. Although you told people that your Acme Chorus 5000 made an ethereal noise that reminded you of Hawkwind meeting a jet engine in a wind tunnel, in fact said piece of cheap plastic sucked all the low end out of your tone and emitted a weak, querulous tremor that sounded about as cool as a Chihuahua with the flu.

Well, rest assured that those days are long gone, assuming you have around 200 quid to spend on this little white box from the Land Of The Free. Like all of Aguilar's current pedal range, it's been built with solidity, user-friendliness and quality in mind, coming in at over half a kilo (if you've put a battery in it) and a much chunkier item than all those crappy, cheap pedals from the 80s which you've still got in the attic, admit it.

Give that switch a good stamp. Go on, it won't bite you. Tough as a little tank and built to take at least a fair amount of abuse from chorus-hungry bassists, the Chorusaurus (try typing that after a few glasses of claret) has four equally solid controls. As they're black knobs on a white background, they'll stand out nicely on a darkened stage, my pet bugbear when it comes to pedal manufacturers and their designers. Are you reading this, FX manufacturers?

Once you're plugged in and the Chorusaurus is on, with its nice blue light shining at you from between your size 10s, you can get up to all sorts of mischief with the tone options. Blend is the mix between dry and wet signal, with the minimum and maximum a 10:90 and 90:10 ratio respectively. Halfway round gives you the most obvious chorus effect, so experiment depending on your requirements. Rate is the speed of modulation, from the expected slow, unhurried chorus cycles to speedy peaks and troughs, and is the control you'll probably be tweaking most along with intensity, which essentially controls how obnoxious and in-your-face the chorus effect is. Finally there's width, the range in which intensity works.

As a child of the 80s, I wanted that gothic swoosh sound which went out of fashion with Killing Joke and the Cult, and got it pretty quickly thanks to the easily-manageable controls. On the other hand, if you want to make a storm of insistent noise that would terrify a Balrog, max everything out and play some chords. You're going to have a lot of fun with this thing. Most crucially, your lowest frequencies remain present and correct when you switch the Chorusaurus on: there's no sudden loss of bass, a refreshing outcome after all those years of terrible effects.

Okay, at this price you have every right to expect a top-quality product, so in a sense there aren't too many surprises here. Aguilar has thought everything through to an admirable degree, although as per usual we have one tiny niggle, which is that instead of using the super-useful removable-by-hand battery compartment screw on other pedals such as the Agro distortion, Aguilar have used a much smaller Phillips screw that a) requires a screwdriver and b) will get lost much more easily. So take care when changing the battery, eh? Otherwise, you're onto a winner here, chorus fans.

YOU SLAP.
THEY PUNCH.
INTRODUCING THE
KNOCKOUT POWER
OF FLEXSTEELS.
WITH A ONE-TWO COMBO OF
FLEXIBLE FEEL
PLUS
DEEP BRUISING TONE,
THERE ARE
NO CONTENDERS.
DAMIAN
ERSKINE
FLEX STEELS
D'Addario
XL
45 65 85 105
EFX165
REG LIGHT TOP / MED BTM
D'Addario
daddario.com

worldmags

3LEAF AUDIO and DARKGLASS FX

Mike Brooks stomps on fuzz pedals from exciting challengers to the effects market

Bass Direct
www.bassdirect.co.uk

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

3LEAF AUDIO YOU'RE DOOM
PRICE | £180
MADE IN | USA
CONTROLS | Volume, Mix, Gain, Tone, Shape

DARKGLASS ELECTRONICS DUALITY DUAL FUZZ ENGINE
PRICE | £175
MADE IN | Finland
CONTROLS | Level, Blend, Filter, Duality

BGM RATING

3LEAF AUDIO YOU'RE DOOM
BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

DARKGLASS ELECTRONICS DUALITY
BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

3Leaf Audio is a tiny US company started by bassist and engineer Spencer Doren. His 3Leaf Audio Wonderlove envelope filter is one of our favourite bass effects ever: bombproof and simple to use. Most important of all, it sounds great with no unwanted hums or crackles, either from the circuitry or the footswitch. So, has Doren maintained these high standards with his new effect? Oh yes.

Although that curiously punctuated name is definitely odd, the You're Doom has the same nuclear-shelter construction and near-noiseless circuitry as the rest of the 3Leaf range. The simple control layout allows you to balance the sound to the bypass level and adjust the amount of effect you want with the 'mix' control. The gain works as you'd expect, while the tone control alters the high frequency of the sound, much like the 'cutoff' control on an old analogue synth. The 'shape' mini toggle switch changes the mid EQ to give you a brighter or darker sound by scooping or boosting the mids, the latter giving you a powerful and dirty lead tone. It produces the same kind of sawtooth wave distortion that was a part of the sound of those early analogue synths, and works by adding a nasty but smooth distortion to the upper octave harmonics of the note, while still keeping the integrity of your original tone.

This is a really usable and versatile pedal, responding to playing dynamics and gain, so it works best with active basses, although even the weediest pickups will solicit some serious distortion when played hard. And that's the point. Select the mid-scoop with the switch, and by altering your playing dynamics you can change the sound as you play, enabling you to make a repeating bass riff sound like one of those cool Oberheim or Prophet 5 analogue bass synth parts with a slow filter sweep. Flick the switch to mid boost, crank up the tone and you have a brilliant Mini-Moog style lead tone, the sort that Herbie Hancock or Chick Corea used to such good effect back in the day.

On to Finnish company Darkglass Electronics, who are obviously as impressed with the quality of 3Leaf Audio's products as we are, as they've teamed up with Spencer and his team to produce the Duality Fuzz. This features the same solid construction and noiseless circuitry as all 3Leaf effects and offers some truly epic distortion and fuzz effects.

The controls are laid out in a logical sequence, with the 'blend' control allowing you to mix the fuzz effect with your clean bass sound. The 'level' adjusts the level of the effect (well, duh) and the 'filter' control acts as a tone control for the fuzz. The important control here (and the most fun) is the 'duality' knob. Turned fully anticlockwise the distortion is a synthy old-school fuzz – just like Jimi Hendrix might have used with one of his old Electro-Harmonix pedals. Turn it fully clockwise and you have a more contemporary, hi-gain effect – and of course you can blend between the two to find the effect you like.

> "THIS IS A REALLY USABLE AND VERSATILE PEDAL, RESPONDING TO PLAYING DYNAMICS AND GAIN, SO IT WORKS BEST WITH ACTIVE BASSES, ALTHOUGH EVEN THE WEEDIEST PICKUPS WILL SOLICIT SOME SERIOUS DISTORTION WHEN PLAYED HARD"

This pedal is great fun to use. Using the duality control you can dial up just about any fuzz and distortion effect you can imagine, from the subtle to the completely bonkers. Some of the most usable stuff is to be found by blending both kinds of distortion with some clean signal, in effect layering three different bass sounds. There are some brilliant, vintage-sounding effects to be found here.

DIAMOND Bass Compressor and APHEX BASS Aural Xciter

Mike Brooks stomps on two red-hot pedals. Are they Diamonds, or is he just over-Xcited?

Bass Gear • MSL Professional
www.bassgear.co.uk • www.mslprofessional.co.uk

Compressors can be rather hit and miss for most of us low-enders: some players swear by them as they give them a smoother, even response, while others claim that a compressor simply robs their playing of dynamics and subtlety. No matter which side of the compression fence you sit, there's no denying just how many pedals and rack-mountable compressors there are out there. Occasionally, a role-specific pedal comes along that gets us all talking, though, and this offering from Canadian manufacturers Diamond may just be one such example.

A quick look at Diamond's website shows a fine selection of effects units: this particular pedal is a bass-specific version of the company's original optical compressor. Bassists were quick to point out the limitations of the original compressor when using active or extended-range instruments, so the company set about rectifying the issues and came up with this refined pedal. Utilising top-notch circuitry for improved signal headroom and low noise, the pedal comes with an 18V adapter and a simple but effective control layout.

Comp sets the compression threshold at which the effect comes into play, based on the level of the instrument signal; EQ is a 'tilt' style EQ control where a centre frequency is selected using the selector switch (250/900 Hz), and turning the control in either direction boosts either the low or high frequencies (left/right of the centre point) while reducing the level of the opposite frequencies; Volume adjusts the overall output of the affected signal. This last control allows the pedal to act as a signal booster for those occasions when the bass signal really needs to be pushed to the fore.

The simple design and layout makes it very easy to hear the effect that small adjustments have on your signal and tone and, to be honest, Diamond couldn't have made it any simpler. In practice, the pedal works very well indeed: sonically, it's impressive. Some compressors have a reputation for being quite noisy, but this is where the quality of the construction and components makes a big difference, in comparison to other pedals already on the market. Despite having only three controls (OK, four with the switch), the player has a comprehensive range of settings to experiment with, as small adjustments seem have a large impact on the sound.

Fingerstyle lines sound tighter and fuller, without any loss of clarity in the top end, and a rich sustain seems to occur no matter what your playing style. However, it's the slappers among us, and those of a percussive persuasion, who can really benefit from this pedal, as it brings out all the high-end notes that can sometimes go amiss or sound

> "FINGERSTYLE LINES SOUND TIGHTER AND FULLER, WITHOUT ANY LOSS OF CLARITY IN THE TOP END"

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

DIAMOND BASS COMPRESSOR
PRICE | £154
MADE IN | USA
CONTROLS | Lo-frequency boost, lo-frequency selector, harmonics (instrument selector), hi-frequency boost, hi-frequency selector, ground lift
WEIGHT | 594g
DIMENSIONS | 165mm x 62mm x 122mm
POWER SUPPLY | 9V AC (UK plug adapter not included)

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A strong performer that really gives your signal a real kick in the pants
MINUS | The price might put some players off, but it does what it says
OVERAL | Difficult to fault: this pedal is really worth a try. Highly recommended

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

worldmags

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

APHEX BASS AURAL XCITER
PRICE | £199
MADE IN | Canada
CONTROLS | Compression, EQ, EQ tilt point selector switch (250 / 900 Hz), volume
WEIGHT | 346g
DIMENSIONS | 117mm x 55mm x 98mm
POWER SUPPLY | 18V AC (UK plug adapter included, polarity reversing cable included for 9V use)

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A quality pedal that really hits the mark. Solidly built and simple to use
MINUS | Some players might want to have a few more controllable settings, and it's not cheap
OVERALL | A fine piece of kit that delivers an impressive performance

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

smothered by the low-end performance of your instrument. Going from a clean signal without the pedal, to bringing the pedal into play, highlights what a dramatic change this pedal offers. The frequency options of the EQ control have been intelligently selected so that it's not simply a 'top and bottom' effect, but those ever-important mid-frequencies can also be tailored.

This really is a quality product, and it comes as no surprise that players of the calibre of Paul Turner are turning to it for inclusion in their FX set-up. At around the £150 mark it's not cheap, but its build quality and performance – not to mention a five-year guarantee – certainly make it worthy of consideration. Let your ears be the judge, but we were suitably impressed.

Switching to the Aphex Xciter, this offering from the US is ruggedly constructed, simple to use and intuitive: sonically it hits the bullseye. The metal casing is solidly put together, although the raised stomp button section and groove pattern make it look a little cheap, and despite the grooved controls being made of plastic, they feel sturdy and operate smoothly. The pedal can be powered by either an adapter (not included) or a 9V battery, which is accessed via an easy-access plastic cover on the underside. Quarter-inch input/output jack sockets on either side are accompanied by a balanced DI socket on the rear, that also offers phantom power should your mixer offer that as an option.

An exciter is supposed to add depth and tightness to your tone while bringing harmonics and a degree of clarity to the fore, so the controls on offer are no surprise. The low frequency selector offers a range between 80 and 250Hz while the high frequencies range from 700Hz to 7kHz: both boost controls range from 1-10. The Harmonics control pinpoints a specific type of harmonic character to be affected by the controls, but despite being labelled Acoustic Guitar/Bass/Electric Guitar, don't be fooled into thinking the Bass setting is the only useful one to us bassmeisters, as the other two settings throw up some interesting results.

Tested with several different basses, the results were equally impressive despite the different tonal characteristics of each instrument. Using a couple of active basses that have flexible EQ systems, the pedal beefed up the underlying bass response while smoothing out the top end. Interestingly, although there is no mid-frequency control, you can affect the low and high-midrange by turning the lo-frequency control up to full, the hi-frequency control to its minimum setting and then adjusting the boost controls as required until you find a sweet spot. Using the pedal with a passive Precision, the natural tone was drastically improved and offered the player a very distinct change from the natural tone and signal. The midrange bark was tightened up in a positive way while the top and bottom sounded almost supercharged, giving the Precision a modern tone while retaining its classic characteristics. The low end sounded smooth and subtle, with a greater degree of note articulation. Slap players will certainly find a use for this pedal on their pedalboards, as it manages to raise the low frequencies without necessarily raising the signal level, making slaps and thumps sound more transparent and focused while D and G-string plucks have greater warmth.

> "SWITCHING BETWEEN THE VANILLA SIGNAL OF EACH BASS AND THE AFFECTED SIGNAL, THE DIFFERENCES WERE QUITE STARTLING AS IT RADICALLY IMPROVES THE SONIC DETAIL OF YOUR PLAYING"

Switching between the vanilla signal of each bass and the affected signal, the differences were quite startling as it radically improves the sonic detail of your playing. Be in no doubt, this pedal may well offer a sonic nirvana for players looking for that missing something in their tone. Actually, it's so effective and sounds so good, that you may find yourself unable to turn it off. Some players might look at the pricetag and think that it's quite a lot of money for a tone shaping pedal – but we reckon it could be a very worthy investment indeed.

THE LONDON MUSIC SHOWS

MAD FOR MUSIC? WE HAVE A SHOW FOR EVERYONE…

DON'T MISS OUT! KEEP UP TO DATE ON THE LONDON MUSIC SHOWS

THE LONDON BASS GUITAR SHOW
IN ASSOCIATION WITH BASS GUITAR MAGAZINE

THE BIGGEST SHOW IN THE UK ALL ABOUT THE BASS GUITAR

WWW.LONDONBASSGUITARSHOW.COM
FACEBOOK.COM/LONDONBASSGUITARSHOW
@BASSGUITARSHOW

THE LONDON ACOUSTIC SHOW
IN ASSOCIATION WITH ACOUSTIC MAGAZINE

THE YEAR'S BEST EVENT FOR ALL THINGS ACOUSTIC

WWW.LONDONACOUSTICSHOW.COM
FACEBOOK.COM/LONDONACOUSTICSHOW
@LONDONACOUSTIC

THE LONDON DRUM SHOW

FULLY-DEDICATED SELL-OUT DRUM SHOW FOR THE UK DRUMMING COMMUNITY

WWW.LONDONDRUMSHOW.COM
FACEBOOK.COM/LONDONDRUM
@LONDONDRUMSHOW

PERFORMANCES FROM THE WORLD'S TOP ARTISTS

ATTEND MASTERCLASSES

HOTTEST NEW GEAR FROM THE BIGGEST BRANDS AT EXCLUSIVE SHOW PRICES

PLUS MUCH MORE

CURRENT SHOW TICKETS ON SALE NOW

worldmags

EBS

Billy Sheehan Signature Drive Pedal

'Drive like the wind, Billy!' says Mike Brooks of Sheehan's ace new stompbox

Sound Technology Ltd.
www.soundtech.co.uk

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £179
MADE IN | China
CONTROLS | Drive, Tone, Level, Clean, Compression (off, mid, high), Threshold and Compression trim dials (under back plate)
WEIGHT | 480 grams
DIMENSIONS | 115mm x 90mm x 35mm
POWER SUPPLY | 9V AC (UK plug adaptor not included)

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Quite possibly the best bass distortion pedal on the market. Top quality, strong performance, intuitive and flexible. Don't be put off by its rock connotations, many a player could benefit by adding this to their FX arsenal
MINUS | It's not cheap but you get what you pay for, it delivers great bass distortion
OVERAL | Highly recommended, other pedal manufacturers will have to go some way to beat this. Billy and EBS have come up with the goods

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

The quest for the ideal distorted bass tone may well be over; power, clarity and brute force in a box. Read on!

Whether you're a fan of Billy Sheehan's playing or not, his main playing tones are instantly recognisable: for years, his distorted tones have come courtesy of preamps designed by Dan Pearce back in Buffalo, New York. The fact that said preamps sell for astronomical figures on the second-hand market reveals the demand for them among bassists. Although his new EBS unit is not a direct copy of those preamps, the Signature Drive is obviously close enough in terms of performance, functionality and tonal delivery for Billy to be happy with it.

EBS's build quality is still second to none, and as a signature pedal (much like the Stanley Clarke Wah pedal), it comes in a custom colour finish, in this case purple. The layout is efficiently simple, with five controls on the front plate: Drive (sets the amount of gain/drive, becoming grittier the more you add), Tone (determines a low to high midrange scoop), Level (sets the level of the driven signal before compression), Clean (sets the level for the clean signal before compression) and Compression (switchable between off, mid (+3dB gain) and high (+6dB gain)). Two additional trim controls reside on the circuit board which can be adjusted with a small Phillips screwdriver: these set the threshold level for compression, and the amount of compression added to the Mid setting.

The inclusion of Loop paths for both the Clean and Drive signals allows the player to add any further effect or processing units to their signal chain in order to fine-tune their overall sound. Some players might think this is over-egging the pudding, but considering the effort to which some players have gone to replicate Billy's sound, and a look at Billy's rack during Mr Big's heyday, this box is doing its utmost to replicate the Sheehan sound in as uncomplicated a fashion as possible.

Down to business... using a couple of different basses and a standard 4x10" cab set-up, EBS should be congratulated on producing a plug-and-play unit that delivers on its promise. Bass distortion has always been a frequency-sapper, but the ability to keep the clean signal to maintain a decent level of bottom end is the winning factor. The distortion itself is outstanding for an effects unit without any tubes in place, and the compression is truly the icing on the cake, offering two distinctive settings for those who need even more projection to cut through, whether playing down and dirty holding the band together or soloing up the dusty end of the neck.

Moving over to a Yamaha Attitude bass and a two amp/two cab setup to try and replicate Mr Sheehan a little further, there is no doubt that Billy's set-up and signal chain is what it is – but the EBS unit takes that and wraps a big snarling purple bow around it. Had EBS brought this pedal to market when Billy was riding the David Lee Roth/Mr Big wave of popularity in the early 90s, they would have shifted these pedals by the warehouse-load and many a player could have recreated the sounds they were hearing on record and live. Twenty-odd years later, it's finally here and it was truly worth the wait. Enjoy.

MOOER

Thunderball Bass Distortion

Small is the new big, says Joel McIver, particularly if you're looking for big fuzz tones at recession-proof prices

Strings And Things
www.stringsandthings.co.uk

Amps, basses, pedals, they're all getting smaller lately. In fact, here at *BGM* Towers we have an almost unhealthy fixation on how much bass gear can reduce in size before, like the unfortunate fellow in *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, they vanish completely. This is what happens when you spend the entire 80s and 90s lugging massive instruments and cabs up and down club stairs, enriching your local osteopath in doing so. Small is good in the bass world, believe us.

And when it comes to distortion pedals, it's hard to picture any pedal getting much smaller than Mooer's Thunderball. Perhaps unwisely, they've given it a black case, making it a touch tricky to see through the dry ice on stage when you play Madison Square Garden, although the white text and controls should stand out clearly enough. The main control, the rotary gain pot at front and centre, is the main focus of your attention, as well as the tone and volume controls for fine tweaking. Apart from a choice of fuzz or distortion modes, which switch between warm rock sounds and crisp metal tones, that's basically it. Three knobs to tweak, a reasonable range of overdrives and the security of knowing that you've only blown 50 quid on the thing.

That's the Thunderball's USP, of course: the fact that it doesn't cost a bomb as well as being easy to use and ridiculously portable. I could name a dozen similar units that cost another 30 quid and offer twice as many tones, but that's not really the point. The Thunderball sounds ace and will be just the thing for anyone who is starting to investigate a fuzzed-up tone but doesn't want to blow a week's budget on it. Lose it backstage? Not the end of the world. Someone nicks it from the van? You and your credit card will live to fight another day. User-friendly, effective at what it does and unlikely to give you lower back pain unless you're less than 18 inches in height, the Thunderball does its job splendidly.

"THE MOOER THUNDERBALL SOUNDS ACE AND WILL BE JUST THE THING FOR ANYONE WHO IS STARTING TO INVESTIGATE A FUZZED-UP TONE"

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £49.99
CONTROLS | Distortion and Fuzz selector, Volume, Tone, Gain
POWER | DC 9V Adapter
WEIGHT | 160g/0.44lbs
DIMENSIONS | 93.5mm (D) x 42mm (W) x 52mm (H)

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Solid, portable, efficient, cheap
MINUS | Wider tone ranges available for a few quid more
OVERALL | Does a great job at a wallet-friendly price

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

worldmags

SOURCE AUDIO

Soundblox 2 Bass Micromodeler

Joel McIver gets ready to give a versatile overdrive unit a mighty stomping

First Line Distribution
www.firstlinedistribution.com

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £174.95
CONTROLS | Effect selector, Drive, Mix, Output level, Tone, Noise Gate (3 levels), Tone Shape (3 levels), 2 foot controls
DIMENSIONS | L 4.4", W 45", H 2.25"
WEIGHT | 1lb
POWER | 9V DC adapter (included)

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Robust, wide range of useful effects, noise gate
MINUS | Text size impractical onstage
OVERALL | An all-in-one overdrive solution that won't break

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

There are now so many fuzz-shaping options available to the bassist beyond the usual combinations of fingers, pick, wood, holes in your speaker, the EQ on your instrument and amp head that pretty soon we'll all be able to wirelessly summon up any overdriven tone we like from a dedicated satellite in orbit. I wrote that as a joke, but reading it again, I wish someone would actually do it.

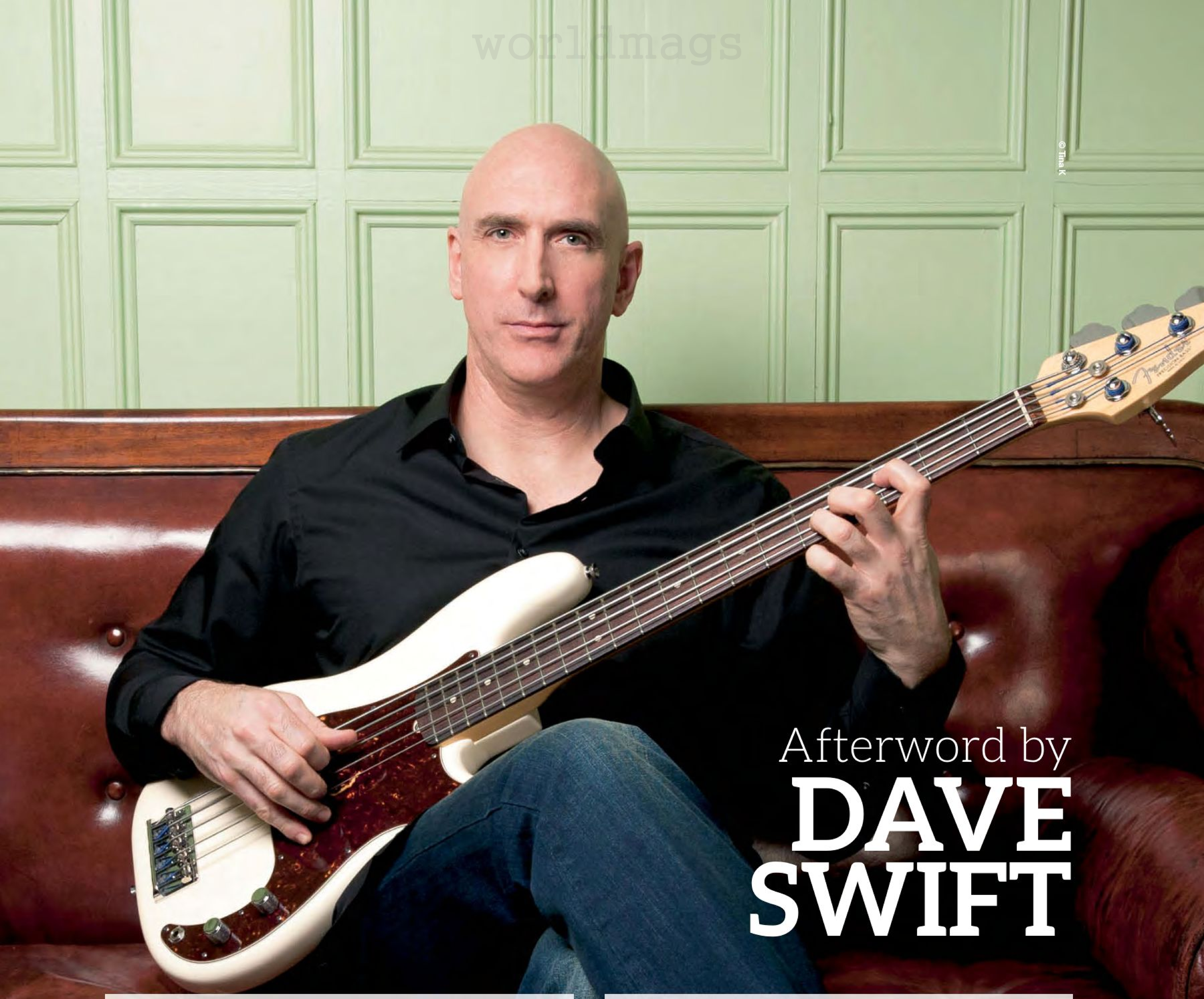
Before that happy day, however, bassists can settle for a unit like this one. The (deep breath) Source Audio Soundblox 2 Bass Micromodeler comes in at the thick end of 200 quid and as such bears a weight of expectation, specifically that it needs to be damn good to justify that kind of spend for a pedal. Pick the thing up and it's reassuringly weighty: there's no way your drunken singer is going to break it when (not if) he trips over it. Its seven controls, two stompable and five rotary, are smooth and probably impossible to snap off, and there's a Christmas tree of LEDs that light up at various times, so seeing it on stage is not going to be a problem. Manipulating it with precision might require some attention, though, as the text is weeny and some of it blue on a dark grey background. You may think I'm splitting hairs, but say that when it's pitch dark on stage and you need to change overdrives.

Talking of which, plug the SAS2BM in and you're instantly rewarded with a real box of delights. The central control takes you clockwise through three overdrives, four fuzzes and five distortions, and while there's obviously some overlap between them all – especially when the effect level is set low – the unit does a good job of supplying recognisable tones from fuzz units that we all know and love. As is so often the case in these litigation-happy times, the various tones are given euphemistic nicknames – 'TS9000' for Tube Screamer, 'Big Pi' for Big Muff Pi and (our favourite for sheer audacity) 'Fuzz Façade' for Fuzz Face. While these tones deliver a healthy approximation of these famous pedals, that's only the beginning of the SAS2BM's capabilities. The Drive control pushes up or lowers the gain, Mix combines the dry and wet signals and Tone cuts or boosts one of three Tone Shapes, which focus on top, mid and bass. Fiddle with these long enough and you can come up with a variety of your own tones that you can then save, alternating between presets and your own sounds with the two footswitches. It's clever stuff. We like.

One criticism, although it's not really a poke at this unit as such. Tone freaks will love the SAS2BM's ability to zoom in on the perfect overdrive. Everyone else, and by that we mean 90 per cent of bass players, will probably be just as happy with a cheap distortion pedal off eBay for 30 quid. A world of endless tone options will have its drawbacks, you mark my Luddite words. Even so, if you want to spend £175 on an overdrive, make sure you try this pedal first.

Advanced Audio Distribution 79
Anaconda 21
Andy Baxter Basses 19
Ashdown 15
Barnes & Mullins 11, 31
Bass Centre 35
Bass Direct 39
Carvin 85
D'Addario 105
Darkglass 116
Elixir 53
Fusion product company 83
Great British Bass Lounge 2
Headstock 65
Orange 95
Pedulla 89
Radial 49
Rotosound 89
Skjold Design 43
Strings and Things 47
Thomann 70, 71
Thomas & George Martin 56, 63
Warwick 7, 27, 115

worldmags



© Tina K

Afterword by DAVE SWIFT

I hope you've enjoyed this bookazine, and found it interesting and informative. It's no secret that over the years I've played, owned, and collected a lot of bass guitars. As a kid growing up in Wolverhampton in the late 60s and early 70s I collected all manner of things relating to my love of old monster movies, comics, posters, bubblegum cards, action figures and so on, so I guess it was inevitable that bass guitars were going to be added to the list.

I knew absolutely nothing about bass guitars back then – I was a trombone player at first – so my eldest brother took me to a local music shop to help me choose one. That first bass was a Kay, a copy of a Fender Precision. To this day, it's been the heaviest bass I've ever owned! Good job I was a strapping six-foot teenager…

I quickly got rid of the Kay and bought another Precision copy. It was a blonde Aria Pro II with a fretless maple fingerboard. I absolutely loved this bass: I was thrilled at the challenge of playing a fretless instrument, and this prompted me to take up the double bass shortly afterwards. From there I moved quickly on to a Squier Jazz, a MusicMan Cutlass I, an Ibanez, a Steinberger five-string and a Ken Smith six.

Back then, I wasn't at all interested in vintage instruments – I wanted basses which were shiny and new – but in the early 90s I was in Edinburgh on tour with Jools Holland and I spotted a beautiful Olympic white 1978 Fender Jazz, with a rosewood fingerboard and block inlays, with both chrome covers and thumbrest all intact. I bought it there and then for £575, and that was it – I was hooked on vintage basses, and decided to look for more. The collecting bug had entered my life once again, and there was no stopping me!

Other basses which I've played and owned which have stood out have been made by Fodera, Rob Allen, Dingwall, Citron, Sadowsky, F Bass, and most recently Skjold. Even though I'm an unashamed collectaholic of basses, I feel I do have a legitimate excuse. I've been Jools Holland's bassist for 24 years now, and because I appear on his TV and radio shows, as well as live onstage, I'm required to play with a huge array of international artists, performing every musical genre imaginable. Because of this, and the diverse nature of the music, I do genuinely need to have a large number of basses at my disposal.

Most bassists can get away with using a single fretted instrument, but I need to have access to vintage basses, especially for the look and vibe; four- and five-string fretted and fretless basses; passive and active basses; hollow-bodied basses; piezo-equipped basses; double basses; and electric upright basses (EUBs).

Well, that's my excuse and I'm sticking with it!

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have 50 bass guitars in the next room which need a good polish…

Warwick®
CUSTOM SHOP
MASTERBUILT • HANDCRAFTED IN GERMANY
STU
HAMM
JOE
SATRIANI
STEVE
VAI
FRANK
GAMBALE
ERIC
JOHNSON
MICHAEL
SCHENKER
The new Warwick Stu Hamm Signature Bass
WWW.STUHAMM.COM
The first Carbon-Neutral Company in the Music Industry
Family Owned - Solar Powered - Sustainably Manufactured in a Green Environment
www.warwick.de shop.warwick.de
info@warwick.de www.facebook.de/warwickmusicdistribution
ClimatePartner
climate neutral
Instrument | ID: 11117-1212-1002
Warwick®
Basses, Amps&Rock'n Roll.
DEUTSCHE
MANUFAKTUREN
Handmade-in-Germany
EMAS
ISO 50001

worldmags

Darkglass Electronics

Your vision, our gear.

DESIGNED WITH ELEGANCE BUILT FOR WAR

MICROTUBES B3K: CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT

MADE IN FINLAND

Assembled in Finland
All of our products are assembled by hand in our Helsinki shop by our experienced, fully covered and well paid builders.

Expanded Attack Switch functionality
The new "Cut" option on the Attack switch adds a whole new layer of tonal possibilities.

UK sourced PCB
We've made an effort to keep all the processes in the EU. Our printed circuits are assembled in England using the best components available in the market.

New bypass system
Silent and transparent buffers. Spring actuator/tact switch mechanism rated for one million cycles.

Unibody chassis
100% made in Helsinki. These new chassis are carved out of a single aluminum block. The new finish is not just ravishing and aesthetically gorgeous but it allows for perfect consistency and unparalleled mechanical precision.

DARKGLASS.COM/CREATIONS

FOLLOW US